

THE USE OF NATURAL DETAILS IN ENGLISH POETRY:

1645-1668

by

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PART THREE

ENGLISH POETS : 1645-1668

Chapter VII

John Milton's Early Poems

Many of the poems that Milton collected in his 1645 volume had been written a good deal earlier. The ode 'On the Morning of Christ's Nativity' is dated 1629, Comus 1634, 'Lycidas' 1637, and 'L'Allegro' and 'Il Penseroso' some time between 1629 and 1634. But they have more than one claim to be included in a study of nature imagery in the second half of the century, and, indeed, provide an obvious point of departure. Besides offering the intrinsic interest of their handling of natural details, they stand in a central position with regard to both past and future developments. As we have seen,¹ Josephine Miles located the important shift from the predominance of "good" to the predominance of "bright" - from the inner world of moral concerns to the outer world of physical appearances - in Milton's work. Milton, however, was a symptom rather than a cause of this shifting emphasis. His early poems made little impression on his contemporaries. Raymond Dexter Havens, who has plotted the course of his popularity and influence, finds that he "is practically never mentioned as a poet in any book published during his lifetime".² Paradise Lost was the first work to be generally admired: there were over a hundred editions between 1705 and 1800. But it was a long time before the poems of the 1645 volume gained a wide audience. No second edition was called for until 1673, and even then they seem to have made little headway with public taste.³ Havens has shown that real popularity did not come till the 1740s, when 'L'Allegro' and 'Il Penseroso' in particular

provided inspiration for the work of the elder Warton, Gray, and Collins.⁴ Nevertheless, even before their great vogue in the fifth decade of the eighteenth century, they had their admirers and imitators, as the numerous borrowings cited in the appendices of Havens's book reveal. But although Havens is correct in his general outline of Milton's influence, his account of the early years is inadequate. He notices only the borrowings of Robert Baron in the Cyprian Academy (1647), and a handful of other debtors towards the end of the seventeenth century, making no mention of the fact that Benlowes, the Duchess of Newcastle, Marvell, and possibly Lovelace and Vaughan all derived ideas or natural images from the poems of the 1645 collection.⁵

So much for the young Milton's relationship with the future. His connections with the past are of almost equal importance. He himself claimed Spenser as his master, and indeed, he stands alone among the important poets of his generation in belonging to neither the Donne/Herbert nor the Jonson tradition. Traces of metaphysical wit and Cavalier elegance can be found in his work, but his inspiration is predominantly Elizabethan. The conventions of the pastoral elegy, the "catalogue of delights", the "ideal day", the list of flowers, the mythology of nature, the sensuous image, the formal symbol all take on a new vigour in the poetry that he wrote when the prevailing movement in secular verse was towards witty conceit and dialectical tone.

1. Early "Elizabethan" Poems.

The opening of the elegy 'On the Death of a Fair Infant Dying

of a Cough' (which may be dated as early as 1625-6,⁶ and which was omitted from the 1645 edition) reveals Milton's allegiance to both the sensuousness and the rhetorical expansiveness of the Elizabethan brand of conceit:-

O fairest flower no sooner blown but blasted,
 Soft silken Primrose fading timelessly,
 Summer's chief honor if thou hadst outlasted
 Bleak winter's force that made thy blossom dry;
 For he being amorous on that lovely dye
 That did thy cheek envermeil, thought to kiss
 But kill'd alas, and then bewail'd his fatal bliss.⁷

The elaboration of the image of winter desiring a kiss (which continues through the two succeeding stanzas with references to "grim Aquilo" and his "icy-pearled car"), and the verbal wit in the antithesis of "kiss" and "kill'd", clearly derive from the mythologizing fancy of such latter-day Spenserians as Giles and Phineas Fletcher, rather than from the more intellectual wit of Donne.⁸ The substance of the image, however - and the secret of its appeal to the imagination - lies not in the conceit but in the sensuous richness of the "Soft silken Primrose" and the cheek delicately glowing with "that lovely dye", which adds immediacy and pathos to the traditional symbol for dying youth.⁹

The 'Song: On May Morning' (written in 1630) belongs to the tradition of bravura season-pieces developed from the mediaeval Spring song which was discussed in Chapter IV:-

Now the bright morning Star, Day's harbinger,
 Comes dancing from the East, and leads with her
 The Flow'ry May, who from her green lap throws
 The yellow Cowslip, and the pale Primrose.

Hail bounteous May that dost inspire
 Mirth and youth and warm desire!
 Woods and Groves are of thy dressing,
 Hill and Dale doth boast thy blessing.
 Thus we salute thee with our early Song,
 And welcome thee, and wish thee long.

(pp.41-2)

As in the previous poem, natural processes are personified and the generalised impression of the conventional conceit ("Flow'ry May", the "dressing" of woods and groves) is sharpened momentarily into focus with the more particular details of "The yellow Cowslip, and the pale Primrose". J.B. Leishman suggests that several of the images in this short song were derived from Shakespeare, and comments on the large number of phrases that were taken by Milton and others from the same source:-

Many of them, I think, would be found to be tributes, not merely to Shakespeare's mastery of language, but also to his careful and loving observation of what Warton called 'real nature'. He taught other poets not merely to write but to see.¹⁰

One more natural image from these early pieces may be mentioned before turning to the more substantial poems of the 1645 volume: the sonnet 'O Nightingale!', which begins:-

O Nightingale, that on yon bloomy Spray
 Warbl'st at eve, when all the Woods are still,
 Thou with fresh hope the Lover's heart dost fill,
 While the jolly hours lead on propitious May
 Thy liquid notes that close the eye of Day,
 First heard before the shallow Cuckoo's bill,
 Portend success in love.

(p.53)

The first two lines give a strong impression of first-hand experience, but in fact the whole passage is literary in origin. The lines in question are a fairly close translation of lines

25-6 of Milton's own Latin Elegy V, 'In Adventum Veris':-

Iam, Philomela, tuos foliis adoperta novellis
Instituis modulos, dum silet omne nemus.

(p. 38)

And Merritt Hughes notes that they recall several sonnets by Giovanni della Casa, Giacomo Cenci, and Cardinal Bembo, and that the contrast between the propitious song of the nightingale and the ill omen of the cuckoo is derived from an early poem by Sir Thomas Clanvowe.¹¹ Milton's achievement in many of the descriptive passages of the 1645 poems was to refashion phrases and observations of nature from previous literature in such a way that they are felt to have a new freshness and fitness in the context he provides for them.

2. 'On the Morning of Christ's Nativity'.

Milton's use of natural details in his first major poem, 'On the Morning of Christ's Nativity', shows him already master of the traditional material - master and not servant, for he does more than simply reproduce the established formulae. Donne's revolt from conventionality had involved a rejection of Elizabethan imagery, methods, and poetic diction. Milton's originality consists in discovering the spark of vital poetry in material dulled by familiarity. For example, stanza III of the introduction ends:-

Now while the Heav'n by the Sun's team untrod,
Hath took no print of the approaching light,
And all the spangled host keep watch in squadrons bright?
(p. 43)

Milton is exploiting the conventional periphrastic methods so often employed for descriptions of dawn or sunset, but he is aiming at something far more serious than elevated style or decorative effect.¹² He relies on the familiar symbolism of sun/Son to set up a tension between the everyday event of the dawn, which "the Sun's team" draws above the horizon, and the unique miracle of "the approaching light" of Christ's incarnation. This ambivalence in the image of light carries over into the third line, to revitalize the standard personification of stars as squadrons or sentinels.¹³ They "keep watch" for the ordinary sunrise as stars; and as "the spangled host" of angels, they wait for the Nativity, guarding against evil as well as merely looking on. The wider context of the poem liberates yet a further dimension of meaning from this periphrasis. The Hymn expands the theme that Christ has come to claim his birthright as Lord of Nature - he is even called "the mighty Pan" in stanza VIII. This theme has two aspects: firstly, the objects of nature pay their homage; and secondly, the pagan deities who had usurped power in the natural world are driven out. The opening lines of the Hymn establish the relationship between Christ and His world:-

It was the Winter wild,
While the Heav'n-born child,
All meanly wrapt in the rude manger lies;
Nature in awe to him
Had doff't her gaudy trim,
With her great Master so to sympathize:
It was no season then for her
To wanton with the Sun, her lusty Paramour.
(pp. 43-44)

The succeeding stanzas express Nature's "awe" and sympathy through various details. In stanza II:-

She woos the gentle Air
To hide her guilty front with innocent Snow,
And on her naked shame,
Pollute with sinful blame,
The Saintly Veil of Maiden white to throw.
(p. 44)

These two passages in conjunction breathe new life into more well-worn material. The "gaudy trim" of summer and autumn vegetation, and the "Veil" of snow, derive from the common images of spring "clad" in green, or summer decked in flowery "robes". Absorbed into the context of Christ coming to redeem fallen Nature, they take on a fuller significance as garments of sin and penitence. In stanza V, the winds and waters are stilled with wonder and joy; in stanza VI, "The Stars with deep amaze / Stand fixt in steadfast gaze"; and in stanza VII:-

The Sun himself withheld his wonted speed,
And hid his head for shame,
As his inferior flame,
The new-enlight'n'd world no more should need;
He saw a greater Sun appear
Than his bright Throne, or burning Axletree could bear.
(p. 45)

The horses of Phoebus and the "spangled host" of the initial periphrasis are seen to be part of this wider conception of an animistic nature, responding to the advent of its Lord. Stanza VII reveals that "by the sun's team untrod" was much more than a periphrastic description of the hours before dawn. The sun's course was checked by the supernatural event - just as the winds and seas

as "drear", "lonely", "wild", "fairly begins with Milton and may develop from him". He goes on:-

When he deals with the terrestrial scene, though he shows no such pleasure as Wordsworth and Coleridge, Shelley and Byron in savage mountain scenery, he shows more than any poet before him in a landscape desolate and solitary, or darkened with superstitious and legendary associations.¹⁵

The coming of Christ has put an end to the sovereignty over nature of the creatures of Greek mythology: the Genius and the nymphs must be recognized for what they are, illusions of an unenlightened fancy. But for Milton they had a powerful life in the imagination, and he is loth to dismiss them as worthless. Hence the note of regret as he banishes them. For most writers of the seventeenth century, the dryads and other sylvan creatures were little more than poetic machinery, like Cupid and his mother. They were at best pleasantly fanciful, at worst drably conventional. In Milton's mind they seem to have regained something of their original power, as ways of responding to the natural world. While not believing in them in an objective sense, one recognizes in his poetry their imaginative reality as an expression of feelings about nature. It is this feeling that comes through the words in this stanza. The creatures of myth are a means of expressing the sense that "lonely" mountains have a mysterious presence in them; that the springs and dales are "haunted"; that the "twilight shade" and the "tangled thickets" are inhabited. With Milton this vitality, which was still strong in much of the best Elizabethan verse, more or less passes out of the classical sylvan mythology until Keats imbues it

briefly with new life from his own intense imagination, sensing, among other things, "the Naiad 'mid her reeds", who "press'd her cold finger closer to her lips".

3. 'L'Allegro' and 'Il Penseroso'.

'L'Allegro' and 'Il Penseroso' were treated by the early enthusiasts of the eighteenth century mainly as models of descriptive verse. John Aikin saw them as "perhaps the most captivating pieces of the descriptive kind that all poetry affords"; and Nathan Drake as "the most exquisite and accurately descriptive poems" in the language.¹⁶ Modern critics have been preoccupied with their date and place of composition;¹⁷ their sources - ranging from Burton, Nicholas Breton, Fletcher, and Shakespeare to the entire pastoral tradition going back to Virgil and Theocritus;¹⁸ their connections with current genres;¹⁹ and their "meaning" - are they about Day and Night, the Active and Contemplative lives, Milton's own struggle to write in a period of creative barrenness, the Merry and Melancholy Man, or merely Mirth and Melancholy as abstractions?²⁰

Critical discussion of the poems has largely centred on the impact and function of the natural details: are they general or particular; do they call up precise pictures; are they evocations, rather than descriptions, of scenes; or are they rather used to evoke human moods?²¹ The most fruitful way of approaching this problem is suggested by two remarks in J.B. Leishman's book on Milton. He reminds us of the "very important distinction between precision of outline, or of imaginative direction, achieved

mainly by the use of most carefully chosen adjectives, and minuteness of visual detail", and of the poetic craftsman's overriding concern for decorum, "the subordination of the parts to the whole, the placing of words in a line, of lines in a passage, of passages in a poem".²² One must pay constant attention not only to the natural details themselves, but also to the language used to speak about them,²³ and the overall intention (or effect) of the poem they belong to.

'L'Allegro' begins with a rejection of "loathed Melancholy". Various natural images are associated with this state of mind: "blackest midnight", "brooding darkness", "the night-Raven", "Ebon shades, and low-brow'd Rocks", and "dark Cimmerian desert". This opening passage is not descriptive, although grammatically many of the details in it form a structural unit which amplifies the "uncouth cell" that Melancholy is to retire to. The important thing is that the objects mentioned all belong not only to the same semantic field, but also to the same area of suggestiveness. Similarly, the adjectives attached to them do not function as sensuous descriptive terms. "Black", "dark", "brooding" in other contexts might be descriptive of physical qualities; here they are productive of atmosphere. "Low-brow'd" is the most specific adjective in the passage but its effect is not to make us visualize the overhanging rocks, but to instil a feeling of oppression.

Natural details are also associated with the introduction of Mirth. The "Wind that breathes the Spring", the dawn, the "Beds of

Violets blue", the roses all contribute to the establishing of another mood; the "descriptive" words set the tone of the whole passage: "frolic", "fresh-blown". The roses are not there to be visualized; they are there because of the associations of youth and freshness that they bring with them. The details and their attributes only function fully in context, as a contrast to the opening lines. The blueness of the violets is mentioned not to help us form a picture in the mind's eye, but as a more colourful contrast to the black and "Ebon" surroundings of melancholy. The roses are "washt in dew" to suggest early morning as a foil to midnight and the night-Raven.

The main "descriptive" section of the poem, which begins at line 41, is prefaced by the couplet:-

To live with her, and live with thee,
In unreprieved pleasures free.

This conditions all that follows. Mirth is the "Mountain Nymph, sweet Liberty", and a sense of freedom breathes through the account of country pleasures.

What we are told about the lark is not objectively descriptive. It is heard to "startle the dull night". "Dull" is an evaluative word; it does not describe. Milton is expressing an attitude towards night which is appropriate to the Merry Man, and also suggesting the effect of the lark's early song on the speaker - it startles him from sleep. The beauty of the line "Till the dappled dawn doth rise" owes more to the sounds of the alliteration than to any visual image raised by the conventional epithet. The bird's

song is further interpreted in terms of the speaker's reaction to it in the phrase "bid good-morrow". The Sweet-briar, the Vine, and the "twisted Eglantine" are alternative edgings for a possible window; no specific scene is evoked. And they are all plants with pleasant associations, growing wantonly as befits freedom.

The next couplet contains one of the Elizabethan (as opposed to Metaphysical) conceits which occur from time to time in Milton's early poems:-

While the Cock with lively din,
Scatters the rear of darkness thin.
(11. 49-50)

The adjective "lively" does not attempt to capture the unique sound of the cock; rather it relates it to the prevailing mood. Similarly, the purpose of the whole conceit is not to conjure up precise sensuous impressions, but to fit the detail from nature into the Merry Man's evaluation of experience. The "dull night" is an enemy to be startled and put to flight.

Lines 51-52 appeal more directly to the visual imagination:-

And to the stack, or the Barn door,
Stoutly struts his Dames before.

The image-making power of this seems to lie in the verb and adverb - "Stoutly struts". The actual items of the scene - the stack, the barn door, the hens - are not particularized, but the poet forces us to create some sort of picture for ourselves by placing them in relation to each other. The cock struts "to the stack" and "his Dames before", so we are provided with the rudiments of an actual

scene: the bird moving in a particular manner and in a particular position in relation to several other named objects. There is what Leishman called "precision of outline", but not "minuteness of visual detail".

The lines referring to the sun's rising provide an example of the rephrasing of a traditional periphrastic conceit:-

Right against the Eastern gate,
Where the great Sun begins his state,
Rob'd in flames, and Amber light,
The clouds in thousand Liveries dight.
(11. 59-62)

This is suggestive of the dawn sky, but makes no effort to create a precise picture. It succeeds as a pleasing pattern of words reworked from countless similar images of the sun as a king in fine raiment.

The Ploughman, Milkmaid, Mower, and Shepherd are particularized just enough to ensure that they appeal to the imagination, but none is allowed to upset the balance of the impression by attracting too much attention. The details are carefully selected to contribute to the overall mood: the first "Whistles o'er the Furrow'd Land"; the second "singeth blithe"; the third "whets his scythe", suggesting activity to come; the fourth enjoys the shade of the "Hawthorn" - that is, the May-tree, which is suited to the spring when Mirth was begotten. After these aural delights, the poet turns back to the scenery:-

Straight mine eye hath caught new pleasures
Whilst the Landscape round it measures.
(11. 69-70)

The eye surveys the countryside, catching a general impression of variety, but not pausing to single out any object in detail:-

Russet Lawns and Fallows Gray,
Where the nibbling flocks do stray;
Mountains on whose barren breast
The laboring clouds do often rest;
Meadows trim with Daisies pied,
Shallow Brooks, and Rivers wide.
Towers and Battlements it sees
Bosom'd high in tufted Trees.
(11. 71-78)

The delight is in the whole scene - what Hopkins was later to enjoy: "Landscape plotted and pieced - fold, fallow, and plough". Everything contributes to a feeling of order in variety and rural well-being which was a feature of the popular Dutch landscape paintings of the seventeenth century.²⁴ It is this feeling that inspires the poetry, not any of the particular items that come under the sweep of the observing eye. The meadows are characterized as "trim" - neat, well-ordered; even the mountains are softened by being presented as places where the "laboring clouds do often rest". In the same way the towers and battlements, which might bring associations of war, are absorbed into the prevailing vision by the image of "tufted Trees" and the suggestions of the word "bosom'd".

The effect of the couplet:-

Hard by, a Cottage chimney smokes,
From betwixt two aged Oaks,
(11. 81-82)

is not primarily that which Tillyard describes.²⁵ We are not compelled "to fill in the detail". Rather we respond to the sense of comfortable relationship between man and his surroundings: the

"aged Oaks" suggest not a particular scene so much as a stable environment, in which man has established a secure niche for himself.

From this point the poem passes from the countryside to the pleasures of human society in the "upland Hamlets" and the "Tow'red Cities".

Like its companion poem, 'Il Penseroso' begins with a rejection of its opposite quality, and an account of the birth of its subject. Once again natural details are associated with the two passages. The "deluding joys" and "fancies fond" that are banished are said to be:-

As thick and numberless
As the gay motes that people the Sunbeams:
(11. 7-8)

What might elsewhere have been an image of approbation becomes in this context one of condemnation. The adjective "gay" is not descriptive, but evaluative. And "gay" belongs to a class of words that the poem has established as blameworthy: "joys", "toys", "idle", "fond", "gaudy".

Melancholy was begotten by Saturn on Vesta:-

Oft in glimmering Bow'rs and glades
He met her, and in secret shades
Of woody Ida's inmost grove.
(11. 27-29)

"Glimmering" and "secret" become in context good words. Milton is doing what Dr. Johnson had discerned: he is showing how, "among the successive variety of appearances, every disposition of mind takes

hold on those by which it may be gratified".²⁶ He prepares the mind for the selection of delights in the body of the poems by creating a mood and prescribing a kind of acceptable detail in the exaggerated rhetoric of the respective introductions. In 'L'Allegro' such natural phenomena as night, darkness, shades, and rocks are given unpleasant associations by their connection with words like "loathed", "horrid", "unholy", "jealous"; in 'Il Penseroso' the sort of things which pleased the merry mind are dismissed as "fickle", "idle", and "gay".

Where the mirthful mind chose to begin the catalogue of delights with the lark and the dawn, the contemplative mind of the melancholy man thinks of the pleasures of dusk and night, when the nightingale sings and the moon shines with a dim light. Philomel tells of her woe, "Smoothing the rugged brow of night". The effect on the poet is what is being described, just as it was when the lark was said to "startle the dull night" in the companion poem. In both cases, night is not so much personified as substituted for the human participant in the scene.

The next couplet is one which D.C. Allen singles out for comment:-

While Cynthia checks her Dragon yoke,
Gently o'er th'accustom'd Oak.
(11. 59-60)

Allen feels that "the oak is real", and that Milton was remembering it "in all its nocturnal convolutions".²⁷ There is nothing in the words of the text to justify this. Indeed, the effect of the lines

is similar to that of the lines about the cottage and the oaks in 'L'Allegro'. The key word is "accustom'd", which, like "aged" in the other poem, gives a sense of stability, a comfortable assurance that things stay the same. In this poem custom and stability have a special value, because the introduction has rejected things that are deluding and fickle.

Attention is focussed on the moon in the lines that follow:-

I walk unseen
On the dry smooth-shaven Green,
To behold the wand'ring Moon,
Riding near her highest noon,
Like one that had been led astray
Through the Heav'n's wide pathless way;
And oft, as if her head she bow'd,
Stooping through a fleecy cloud.
(11. 65-72)

The moon, except in the last couplet, is not strictly described. She becomes an excuse for a play of the poet's imagination. The important words are "wand'ring", "astray", "wide pathless". The impression is not visual, but emotional. The poet loves to be alone. He has rejected the "gay notes" because they were "thick and numberless". Now the thought of the moon, alone in the sky, chimes perfectly with his mood. It is the mood that is being evoked, rather than the natural detail. The last two lines contain a stronger element of description. The cloud is "fleecy", and the moon appears through it as it thins. But again, the primary effect of the poetry is to record the feelings of the human observer, not his perceptions. The moon bows her head like one in meditation - like Melancholy herself fixing her eyes "on the earth as fast"

(11. 43-44) - and in the act of stooping towards the melancholy man creates a bond of sympathy with him.

After an interlude concerning his nocturnal reading, the poet returns to the natural scene, and thinks of the approach of day:-

Thus night oft see me in thy pale career,
Till civil-suited Morn appear,
Not trickt and frounc't as she was wont
With the Attic Boy to hunt,
But kerchieft in a comely Cloud,
While rocking Winds are Piping loud,
Or usher'd with a shower still,
When the gust hath blown his fill,
Ending on the rustling Leaves,
With minute-drops from off the Eaves.
(11. 121-130)

The description of the dawn "kerchieft in a comely Cloud" belongs to the same order as the lines about the sun "rob'd in flames" and the "clouds in thousand Liveries dight". It is a variation on a familiar trope, which gives pleasure because of the virtuosity displayed in its phrasing and in its decorous adaptation to suit the mood of the context. The last four lines quoted above are the only thing in the two poems that might be called accurately and originally descriptive of a natural phenomenon. A good deal of their effectiveness as poetry, however, comes not from the perception but from the expression - especially from the repeated vowel sound that progresses through the lines, beginning near the start of one line ("usher'd"), recurring a syllable later in the next ("gust"), and shifting towards the end in the next ("rustling"). This is not onomatopoeia; it is not attempting to capture in sound the meaning of the words. It is a musical accompaniment, delightful

in itself - that "musical suggestion" which Tillyard saw as one of the means which Milton employed to compel us to "fill in the detail" of his descriptions.²⁸

The last collection of natural details occurs in the passage which reminded D.C. Allen of the "bee-loud glade" of Yeats:-²⁹

And when the Sun begins to fling
His flaring beams, me Goddess bring
To arched walks of twilight groves,
And shadows brown that Sylvan loves
Of Pine or monumental Oak,
Where the rude Axe with heaved stroke
Was never heard the Nymphs to daunt,
Or fright them from their hallow'd haunt.
There in close covert by some Brook,
Where no profaner eye may look,
Hide me from Day's garish eye,
While the Bee with Honied thigh,
That at her flow'ry work doth sing,
And the waters murmuring
With such consort as they keep,
Entice the dewy-feather'd Sleep;
And let some strange mysterious dream
Wave at his wings in Airy stream,
Of lively portraiture display'd,
Softly on my eyelids laid.

(11. 131-150)

The references to the "twilight groves", "shadows brown", and the "hallow'd haunt" of the nymphs are reminiscent of stanza XX of the Nativity Ode. There is the same sense of nature as the dwelling of otherworldly creatures. Sylvan and the nymphs are not believed in as objective facts - but nor are they merely poetical embroidery: they are felt as imaginative realities, as a means of expressing a human experience of certain aspects of the natural world. The whole passage clearly has connections with classical literature, and borrows phrases and images from English predecessors,³⁰ but it

is also very much of its own time. In its desire to get away from something unpleasant - the "flaring beams" and "garish eye" of the sun - and escape into the shadows and solitude of the woodland grove, and there to experience "some strange mysterious dream", it looks forward to the woodland episodes in Lovelace's 'Aramantha', Benlowes's Theophila, and Marvell's Upon Appleton House.³¹

4. Comus.

Comus³² is the most sensuous of all Milton's early poems, containing more vivid natural details than any of the others. This is doubtless due to the subject of the work. It is about the enticements of the senses, and so needs to be sensuously evocative. Most of the imagery fits into a pattern of opposites: symbolizing either chastity or license. The dominant symbolism is that of light and darkness, but beneath this, other traditionally significant details are clustered, and details of no independent moral value are given meaning by the context.

The characters who are to be tried by the temptations of the senses are lost in:-

. . . the perplex't paths of this drear Wood,
The nodding horror of whose shady brows
Threats the forlorn and wand'ring Passenger.
(ll. 37-39)

This wood is the abode of Comus, who, after wandering long:-

At last betakes him to this ominous Wood,
And in thick shelter of black shades imbow'r'd,
Excels his Mother at her mighty Art.
(ll. 61-63)

The suggestions of darkness - "shady", "drear", "black" - are associated with suggestions of menace - "perplex't", "horror", "ominous". Two ancient symbols are thus brought together: the night and the forest. This wood is like that of Book I, Canto 1 of The Faerie Queene, which Spenser's lady describes:-

This is the wandring wood, this Errours den,
A monster vile, whom God and man does hate.
(st. 13)

Comus enters with the coming of night, to set afoot "midnight shout and revelry". A few lines later the lady describes the approach of darkness. The descriptions given by the two, the representatives of chastity and wantonness, are both highly artificial as accounts of a natural phenomenon, but both reflect the attitude of the speakers. Comus says:-

The Star that bids the Shepherd fold
Now the top of heav'n doth hold,
And the gilded Car of Day
His glowing Axle doth allay
In the steep Atlantic stream,
And the slope Sun his upward beam
Shoots against the dusky Pole,
Pacing toward the other goal
Of his Chamber in the East.
(ll. 93-101)

Three visual details are presented here: the evening star is shining; the sun sinks below the horizon of the sea; the last rays of the sun stream upwards as it sets. Only the third of these records a visual experience with some attempt at pictorial accuracy. But the artificial method of the description, using the classical property of the chariot of the sun, is not mere embroidery. There

are suggestions of vigorous activity in the choice of the word "shoots" and the sensuous richness of "gilded" and "glowing". And the line "His glowing Axle doth allay" contains the idea of an appetite being satisfied, or burning desire being quenched. (C.E.D. supports the interpretation of "allay" as "To subdue, quell (any trouble, as care, pain, thirst); to abate, assuage, relieve, alleviate (II. 11) with a quotation from Paradise Lost, X, 566.) Comus interprets the natural facts according to his own character.

The lady describes the coming of night thus:-

They left me then, when the gray-hooded Ev'n
Like a sad Votarist in Palmer's weed
Rose from the hindmost wheels of Phoebus' wain.
(II. 188-190)

The chariot of the sun again figures in the description, but the fiery colours are replaced by the image of "gray-hooded" Evening, who is like a "sad Votarist" - dedicated as the Lady is to chastity? - and who is also "in Palmer's weed", which links her with the Lady who is a pilgrim (like all men) on this "dim spot" of earth and in this wood of danger.

This is the most pagan, in its imagery, of all Milton's poems. Here more than anywhere else he can let his imaginative sympathy with the anthropomorphic response to nature have its head. Comus, in his speech of revelry following his account of sunset, peoples the night world with mysterious creatures:-

The Sounds and Seas with all their finny drove
Now to the Moon in wavering Morris move,
And on the Tawny Sands and Shelves
Trip the pert Fairies and the dapper Elves;

By dimpled Brook and Fountain brim,
 The Wood-Nymphs deckt with Daisies trim,
 Their merry wakes and pastimes keep:

 Come let us our rites begin,
 'Tis only daylight that makes sin,
 Which these dun shades will ne'er report.
 (ll. 115-121, 126-128)

The lovely second line has a significance beyond its beauty of sound: the moon is a symbol of changeableness, and the seas moving by its attraction are felt as taking part in the revelry ("wavering" perhaps also suggests that their steps are unsteady with wine). The "dimpled Brook" is a pretty visual detail, which adds a delicate anthropomorphic touch to the scene. The whole passage is alive with a sense of the forces of gaiety and abandoned merriment in nature. The pert and dapper creatures of midnight are later balanced by the chaste Sabrina. The last three lines quoted above show the basic light-dark imagery of the poem breaking in again.

Just before the Lady's "sad Votarist" lines, there occur conflicting references to the wood which might be taken as ironical. First the Lady speaks of being lost "In the blind mazes of this tangl'd Wood". Then she tells how her brothers lost her:-

. . . resolving here to lodge
 Under the spreading favor of these Pines,
 Stept as they said to the next Thicket side
 To bring me Berries, or such cooling fruit
 As the kind hospitable Woods provide.
 (ll. 183-187)

The evaluation of the wood expressed in words like "favor", "cooling", "kind hospitable" hardly squares with what is about to happen to the lady. But the passage is not ironical: it shows that

there is more than one way of interpreting nature, and this is to become a major theme of the poem. Later in the same speech, the Lady looks up at the darkened sky:-

I did not err, there does a sable cloud
Turn forth her silver lining on the night,
And casts a gleam over this tufted Grove.
(ll. 223-225)

This is as delicately observed as any of Vaughan's celebrated descriptions of the night sky. And like Vaughan's descriptions, it functions as more than a piece of sensuous ornament. The Lady has just declared her faith that "the supreme good" would not let her fall victim to lust, but would send "a glist'ring Guardian, if need were" to protect her. The light from the cloud is her confirmation. It demonstrates once again the two possibilities in nature. The skies can be sable or silver, dark or light, according to the attitude of the individual.

Comus's response to the Lady's song contains one of the loveliest images in the poem:-

How sweetly did they float upon the wings
Of silence, through the empty-vaulted night,
At every fall smoothing the Raven down
Of darkness till it smil'd.
(ll. 249-252)

This is not simply a sensuous evocation of the beauty of the Lady's singing. It has a moral application which is more important: the voice of chastity can overcome the powers of the night; the "Raven down/Of darkness" submits to it. The very sensuousness of the image is also fitting for the person of the speaker - Comus the sensualist.

The light-darkness symbolism provides the material for the Elder Brother's first speech. It begins with another finely observed and worded description of a natural phenomenon:-

Unmuffle ye faint stars, and thou fair Moon

That wont'st to love the traveller's benison,
Stoop thy pale visage through an amber cloud.
(ll. 331-333)

The Second Brother's reply contains some other details that are of interest:-

Where she may wander now, whither betake her
From the chill dew, amongst rude burs and thistles?
Perhaps some cold bank is her bolster now,
Or 'gainst the rugged bark of some broad Elm
Leans her unpillow'd head fraught with sad fears.
(ll. 351-355)

Burrs and thistles are traditional symbols of wild, uncontrolled nature; but the "rugged bark of some broad Elm" is an example of a natural detail which is given meaning by its context. It is accurately observed and sensuously expressed, and serves to suggest the roughness and inhospitable nature of the wild wood in the brother's imagination.

A little later there is an image of Wisdom as a bird:-

And Wisdom's self
Oft seeks to sweet retired Solitude,
Where with her best nurse Contemplation
She plumes her feathers, and lets grow her wings
That in the various bustle of resort
Were all to-ruffl'd, and sometimes impair'd.
(ll. 375-380)

This is similar to the conventional symbol of the soul as a bird, and presents an interesting parallel (perhaps a source?) to Marvell's

bird-soul in 'The Garden', which, after retiring from the bustle of the "busy companies of men", "whets, and combs its silver wings", "And, till prepar'd for longer flight,/waves in its Plumes the various Light", just as Milton's Wisdom "lets grow her wings".

With Comus's speech "O foolishness of men!" we come to the core of the sensuous theme of the poem. Comus stresses both the traditional plenitude of nature - the "spawn innumerable", the "millions of spinning Worms", "Th'earth cumber'd, and the wing'd air dark't with plumes" - and the sensuousness of nature - "to please and sate the curious taste", "the smooth-hair'd silk", the diamonds which "emblaze the forehead of the Deep" and "bestud with Stars". He sums up his argument for immediate sensuous gratification with a beautifully phrased variation on the image most frequently associated with this theme:-

If you let slip time, like a neglected rose
It withers on the stalk with languish't head.
(ll. 743-744)

The answer to Comus's vision of nature is not really given by the Lady in her reply, but is provided in the Spirit's concluding speech. He presents a picture of "the broad fields of the sky", which is as rich in sensuous detail as Comus's exaltation of the earth:-

. . . there eternal Summer dwells,
And West winds with musky wing
About the cedarn alleys fling
Nard and Cassia's balmy smells.
Iris there with humid bow,
Waters the odorous banks that blow
Flowers of more mingled hue

Than her purfl'd scarf can shew,
 And drenches with Elysian dew
 (List mortals, if your ears be true)
 Beds of Hyacinth and Roses.
 (11. 988-998)

This obviously derives from the same tradition which produced Spenser's Garden of Adonis and Marvell's 'Bermudas' and other earthly paradises.³³ But this is no earthly garden of eternal sunshine. It is an image of Heaven itself, which means that the details which adorn it must be interpreted accordingly. The cedars which grow there are those cedars of Lebanon which were symbolic of Christ;³⁴ Iris must be recognized as much more than a pagan goddess of the rainbow - her "humid bow" is the mark of the Covenant between God and his people. These symbolic meanings are not obtrusive, however, and the description functions chiefly at a level of sensuous richness. Nature's plenty is always at its peak - the rose does not wither "on the stalk" - and fruition is the natural order of things. But whereas the satisfaction of the senses in Comus's vision was brutish, the pleasures of the "broad fields of the sky" are innocent and happy in their outcome. Psyche and Cupid marry, and from their union the "two blissful twins" - Youth and Joy - are born. The Lady's defence of virginity is shown not to be the real answer to Comus's depraved version of nature. Chastity there must be - but the law of nature is "increase and multiply", and it is good for this to happen. But it must take place in the symbolic light of the sky, not in the symbolic darkness

of the midnight forest.

It is interesting to note that Milton borrowed a number of details of image and phrase from Shakespeare in Comus, in many ways the most Elizabethan of his works. Ethel Seaton³⁵ has shown that the poem contains reminiscences of A Midsummer Night's Dream, The Tempest (especially from the Masque of Ceres), and above all Romeo and Juliet. Even the image of the "Raven down of darkness" seems to be based on Romeo and Juliet, III, ii, 18-19:-

For thou wilt lie upon the wings of night
Whiter than new snow on a raven's back.

Milton, however, turns the visual image into a much more sensuous one of touch.

5. 'Lycidas'.

Scholars have been at pains to demonstrate that 'Lycidas'³⁶ draws heavily on the long tradition of pastoral elegy that stretches back through the Elizabethan period to Virgil and its origins in the Greek poets Bion, Moschus, and Theocritus.³⁷ But although the framework and many of the details are traditional, Milton achieves a freshness that depends partly on the beautiful melody of his language and partly on a vigorous handling of natural imagery. The opening lines illustrate how he can revitalise well-worn material. The three plants are all found frequently in pastoral literature: the laurel as a symbol of poetic achievement, the myrtle sacred to Venus, and the ivy, because it is "never sere", emblematic of immortality. These symbolic plants are often merely named, as virtual synonyms for the qualities associated with them, but Milton

involves them in a sensuous relationship with himself, which in turn is significant of an abstract condition - his unreadiness for poetic composition. The usually abstract symbols are presented as concrete objects that can be plucked, shattered, handled by fingers, and mellowed by the seasons. The poet's inner struggle is vividly projected into a physical struggle.

The pastoral account of the friendship at Cambridge between Milton and Edward King earned the scorn of Dr. Johnson,³⁸ but it contains some of the most telling natural images. The line "Under the opening eyelids of the morn" derives ultimately from the Bible and more directly from Thomas Middleton's A Game at Chesse (1625),³⁹ but it is imbued with an added dimension of meaning in the context Milton provides for it. Besides being a picturesque way of describing the dawn, it also suggests the dedication to poetry which caused the two young students to rise early and study late. Its effect is rather like some of those in 'L'Allegro' and 'Il Penseroso', which telescope into a single phrase - (for example, "startle the dull night") - a natural occurrence and the human reaction to it.

"What time the Gray-fly winds her sultry horn" again finds an image to evoke something in nature, but this time the aim is to suggest with great precision the thing itself. The adjective "sultry" captures both the drowsy tone of the insects and the heavy atmosphere of a summer evening. The line "Toward Heav'n's descent had slop'd his westering wheel" may not be astronomically sound as a description of the Evening Star,⁴⁰ but it succeeds in creating

just the right sense of the vastness of the rotating heavens, both through the use of the word "wheel" and through the aural effects of the slowing rhythm and the repeated vowel which seem to imitate the sweeping descent.

The following passage contains Milton's treatment of the conventional lament of nature:-

Thee Shepherd, thee the Woods, and desert Caves,
With wild Thyme and the gadding Vine o'ergrown,
And all their echoes mourn.
The Willows and the Hazel Copses green
Shall now no more be seen,
Fanning their joyous Leaves to thy soft lays.
(ll. 39-44)

Of these lines Hanford remarks:-

From this conventional use of the "pathetic fallacy" Milton, it will be observed, gets a very different effect from that of his Greek originals. For he does not dwell on the fiction that the natural objects express grief; he is taken up with the beauty of the things themselves. It is the description that we remember, not the conceit.⁴¹

Of the epithets attached to natural objects only one - "joyous" - is interpretative. The others - "desert", "wild", "gadding", "green" - apply to physical characteristics. The next few lines rework a number of traditional tropes: the canker, the flower nipped by frost, the garments of nature. But the passage has a freshness that comes partly from the phrasing, and partly from the individual touch of the last line which seems to place it in a landscape of real plants:- "When first the White-thorn blows".

After twice raising the poem to higher concerns, Milton returns to the simple world of natural beauty:-

. . . Return Sicilian Muse,
 And call the Vales, and bid them hither cast
 Their Bells and Flowrets of a thousand hues.
 Ye valleys low where the mild whispers use
 Of shades and wanton winds and gushing brooks,
 On whose fresh lap the swart Star sparely looks,
 Throw hither all your quaint enamell'd eyes,
 That on the green turf suck the honied showers,
 And purple all the ground with vernal flowers.
 Bring the rathe Primrose that forsaken dies,
 The tufted Crow-toe, and pale Jessamine,
 The white Pink, and the Pansy freakt with jet,
 The glowing Violet,
 The Musk-rose, and the well-attir'd Woodbine,
 With Cowslips wan that hang the pensive head,
 And every flower that sad embroidery wears:
 Bid Amaranthus all his beauty shed,
 And Daffadillies fill their cups with tears,
 To strew the Laureate Hearses where Lycid lies.
 (ll. 133-151)

In these lines, much more than in the passage he was referring to, Hanford's remark is substantiated. Although he clearly had earlier models in mind,⁴² Milton creates a strong impression of the beauty and value of these flowers simply as flowers, as a part of the great plenitude and variety of Nature. His means are economical in the extreme. Each flower is succinctly but precisely characterized by a single adjective or descriptive phrase. By the deceptively simple device of isolating the "glowing Violet" in a short line, he allows the imagination to dwell lingeringly on the rich warm colouring of the flower, as if he had stumbled upon it unexpectedly and delightedly as it grew half-hidden among the vegetation underfoot. Never had the humble flower of seventeenth-century poetry been so lovingly and so craftily offered to the imagination in all its retiring beauty. Perhaps the most perceptive critical evaluation of the whole passage as it functions in the

elegy has been made by Christopher Ricks:-

This passage embodies three kinds of consolation available to those who believe in mortality (they are available too to the Christian, but they are virtually all that mortality has). The consolation of the natural world and its varied inexhaustible beauty; the consolation of art itself, for the poem too is a funeral wreath for Lycidas; and the consolation of ritual.⁴³

Milton's flower-passage is the culmination not only of the line of flower-passages running from Spenser through the plays of Shakespeare, but of all those poignant moments in previous literature in which the fragility of youth and beauty has been recognized and regretted in the fleeting splendour of a flower.⁴⁴

We know instantly why the cowslip should "hang the pensive head" and the daffodils "fill their cups with tears"; the imagery of countless poems has taught us that "every flower" does in fact wear "sad embroidery", because its colour and texture must fade and wither. In strewing the hearse of Lycidas, the "Bells and Flowrets of a thousand hues" are celebrating the loveliness and transience of all that is young and must die. Milton has achieved here the supreme expression in English of one of the perennial images of European poetry. What John Crowe Ransom said of 'Lycidas' as a whole is especially true of these lines:-

Here is a poet who can simply lay more of his predecessors under tribute than another. This is not to deny that he does a good job of it. He assimilates what he receives, and adapts it infallibly to the business in hand, where scraps fuse into integer, and the awkward articulations cannot be detected. His second-hand effects are not as good as new but better.⁴⁵

6. Conclusion.

Many of the familiar images and rhetorical devices of seventeenth-century and Elizabethan poetry are found in Milton's early poems: the descriptive periphrasis, the nature-as-art conceit, the pathetic fallacy, the list of flowers, classical mythology, the symbolism of light and darkness and of flowers-as-transience. But they were used by a poet for whom the inherited materials of past literature were not mere platitudes of experience or pretty ornaments with which to decorate his verse. He recognizes, beneath the stale surface of convention, their original freshness as expressions of living experience, and taps the vast reserves of imaginative energy which most poets of his day could no longer discern. It was this same ability to draw upon the vital sources of tradition that was to be one of his main strengths, when he came to compose the supreme poem of the century twenty years later.

NOTES

1. See above, Chapter I, pp. 10-11.
2. Raymond Dexter Havens, "Seventeenth Century Notices of Milton", Englische Studien, XL (1909), p.175.
3. Popular taste in the 1640s can be judged from the fashionable success of Cleveland and the young Cowley, and from the abiding reputation of Quarles's Emblemes.
4. Raymond Dexter Havens, The Influence of Milton on English Poetry (Cambridge, Mass., 1922). See especially Chapter XVII, "Late Vogue of the Shorter Poems", pp. 419-438.
5. See Harold Jenkins, Edward Benlowes (1602-1676) (London, 1952), Appendix II, "Benlowes' Borrowings from Milton", pp. 309-313; for similarities between 'Il Penseroso' and Lovelace's 'Aramantha' and the Duchess of Newcastle's 'A Dialogue between Melancholy, and Mirth', see above Chapter VI, sections 2 and 3; for possible influence on Marvell, see the present chapter, pp.22 and 27-28; a possible connection has been suggested between 'Lycidas' and Vaughan's pastoral elegy, Daphnis, see Louise I. Guiney, "Milton and Vaughan", Quarterly Review, CCXX (1914), 353-364.
6. Recent editors suggest that the correct date is more likely to be 1628. See J.B. Leishman, Milton's Minor Poems (London, 1969), p. 45, n. 1. All further references to Leishman in this chapter are to this book.
7. John Milton: Complete Poems and Major Prose, ed. Merritt Y. Hughes (New York, 1957), p. 35. All quotations from Milton's work in this chapter are taken from this edition, and page references are inserted in the text.
8. Tillyard and Leishman both quote the following verses from the beginning of the tenth poem in The Passionate Pilgrim (1599), which was first cited in connection with Milton's lines by Todd:-
Sweet Rose, fair flower, untimely pluckt, soon faded,
Pluckt in the bud, and vaded in the spring.
Bright orient pearl, alack too timely shaded,
Fair creature killed too soon by Death's sharp sting.
See Tillyard, Milton (1930, Peregrine Books, 1968), p. 17, and Leishman, pp. 46-48.
9. See above, Chapter V, section 1.
10. Leishman, p. 75.
11. See Merritt Hughes's edition of Milton, p. 53.
12. Cf. Chapter IV, sections 1 and 4 above.
13. Cf. Marvell's "Patroul/Of Stars" in Upon Appleton House, pt. XL. See also Merritt Hughes's note on Nehemiah, ix, 6: "the host of heaven worshippeth thee", ed. cit., p. 43.
14. See above, Chapter IV, section 5, for a discussion of the use of the Orpheus myth; for the Biblical background to this kind of imagery see C.A. Patrides, Milton and the Christian Tradition (Oxford, 1966), pp. 71-73. For similar passages in Spenser and Giles Fletcher see Leishman, pp. 57-58.

15. Elmer E. Stoll, "Milton a Romantic", Review of English Studies, VIII (1932), p. 426.
16. Havens quotes these two eighteenth-century critics in The Influence of Milton on English Poetry, p. 10. He cites Nathan Drake's Literary Hours (3rd. ed., 1804), ii. 89, and John Aikin's Letters on English Poetry (2nd ed., 1807), 124.
17. For a long time it was generally assumed that these two poems were written at Horton, after Milton left Cambridge in July 1632. David Masson accepted this view, but denied that Milton was describing one particular prospect:- "The scenery is visionary scenery, made up of eclectic recollections from various spots blended into one ideal landscape". (The Poetical Works of John Milton (London, 1874), II, 206). But in 1932, in Pamphlet no. 82 of the English Association, E.M.W. Tillyard put forward the theory that they belong to the poet's Cambridge days, most probably to the summer of 1631, and that they reflect the happy sojourn in the countryside during a long vacation recorded in the Seventh Prolusion. Tillyard's arguments were later incorporated in the first chapter of The Miltonic Setting (London, 1938). W.R. Parker agreed with this earlier dating in his article "Some Problems in the Chronology of Milton's Early Poems", Review of English Studies, XI (1935), 276-283. A.S.P. Woodhouse also supported the view that the poems were composed in 1631 while Milton was still at Cambridge, in "Notes on Milton's Early Development", The University of Toronto Quarterly, XIII, No. 1 (1943-4), 66-101. A.H.J. Baines made the novel suggestion that 'L'Allegro' was set in the Chilterns, at Chequers, and that the phrase "chequer'd shade" contained a topographical pun, in "The Topography of 'L'Allegro'", Notes and Queries, 188 (1945), 68-71.
18. Eighteenth-century scholars noted the resemblances to a song in Fletcher's The Nice Valour and to another in Burton's Anatomy of Melancholy. F.M. Padelford suggested a borrowing from the introductory verses of the narrative lyric, 'The Sunne when he had spread his raies', in the second edition of Tottle's Miscellany, in "An Unnoted Source of 'L'Allegro'", Modern Language Notes, XXII (1907), 200. Some lines by Nicholas Breton were cited as a source for Milton's poem by John Livingston Lowes, "'L'Allegro' and 'The Passionate Shepherd'", Modern Language Review, VI (1911), 206-209. Nan Cooke Carpenter argued for the influence of Spenser, in "Spenser's 'Epithalamion' as Inspiration for Milton's 'L'Allegro' and 'Il Penseroso'", Notes and Queries, 201 (July, 1956), 289-92. J.B. Leishman brought together many of the earlier suggestions, and provided evidence for other borrowings from others among Milton's predecessors including Shakespeare, in Chapter 6 of Milton's Minor Poems.
19. Sara Ruth Watson places the two poems in a tradition of pastoral accounts of a perfect day in the countryside in

- "Milton's Ideal Day: Its Development as a Pastoral Theme", *PMLA*, LVII, No. 2 (1942), 404-420. Professor Maren-Sofie Røstvig sees 'L'Allegro' as Milton's contribution to the secular Happy Man tradition and 'Il Penseroso' as an example of the more spiritual line of poems about the Serene Contemplator (*The Happy Man*, 2nd ed. (New York, 1962), I, 100). Leishman places both poems in the tradition of "Catalogues of Delights", p. 136.
20. E.M.W. Tillyard, in *The Miltonic Setting*, had noted the similarities between the two poems and Milton's First Prologue, which deals with the subject "Whether Day or Night is the more excellent". The significance of the contrast of day and night for an understanding of the poems' meaning was explored in more detail by Cleanth Brooks, in "The Light Symbolism in 'L'Allegro-Il Penseroso'", *The Well-Wrought Urn* (New York, 1947), pp. 47-61. A.S.P. Woodhouse rejected the view that they were poems in praise of day and night, and preferred to read them as "poems setting forth rival conceptions of a life of pleasure, the one active and social, the other contemplative and solitary" (op. cit., n. 17 above, p. 85). Don Cameron Allen sees the two pieces as autobiographical, recording Milton's "struggle for expressive birth" and outlining "the process that will lead to the eventual fecundation of the poet's imagination" ("The Search for the Prophetic Strain: 'L'Allegro' and 'Il Penseroso'", *The Harmonious Vision* (Baltimore, 1954), p. 9. Allen, incidentally, argues that they were written at different periods of the poet's life: the first while he was still at Cambridge; and the second later at Horton. Rosemond Tuve rejects all the more complicated interpretations, and regards the poems as expressive of the general moods of Mirth and Melancholy, in "Structural Figures of *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*", *Images & Themes in Five Poems by Milton* (Cambridge, Mass., 1957), pp. 15-36.
21. See, for example, Joshua Reynolds, *Discourses* (1769-90) for a discussion of the general and the particular in the two poems; E.M.W. Tillyard for the view that Milton provides us with an outline which "compels us to fill in the detail" (op. cit., p. 9); and Rosemond Tuve for a more sophisticated explanation of the function of the natural images:- "Not one of all these is individualized. They are not 'individuals', unique sights seen by one man's eye, but particulars, irradiated by the 'general' which they signify" (op. cit., p.22).
22. J.B. Leishman, pp. 138 and 158.
23. Edmund Burke was well aware of the fallacy involved in such comments as Nathan Drake's about "accurately descriptive poems". He was able to make the distinction between poetry and painting which was ignored by many eighteenth-century writers:- "The truth is, all verbal description, merely as naked description, though never so exact, conveys so poor and

insufficient an idea of the thing described, that it could scarcely have the smallest effect, if the speaker did not call in to his aid those modes of speech that mark a strong and lively feeling in himself. Then, by the contagion of our passions, we catch a fire already kindled in another, which probably might never have been struck out by the object described". (A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful (1757), ed. J.T. Boulton (London, 1958), pp. 175-6.

24. See Chapter II, section 12 above.
25. "We all know that cottage, but the picture we each make is different from our neighbour's. And it is Milton who makes us make our picture. His outline compels us to fill in the detail". (Tillyard, The Miltonic Setting, p. 9).
26. Samuel Johnson, Lives of the English Poets, "Everyman's Library" (London, 1925), I, 97.
27. D.C. Allen, The Harmonious Vision, p. 11.
28. Tillyard, p. 9.
29. Allen, p. 11.
30. Røstvig suggests comparisons with lines 467-471 and 485-489 of Virgil's second Georgic, and lines 51-58 of the first Eclogue, and with Horace's second Epode, lines 23-28. (The Happy Man, I, 106). Leishman cites Drayton's The Owle, and a phrase from Lucan's Pharsalia. (pp. 155-156).
31. See above, Chapter VI, section 2, and below Chapter XI, section 5 and Chapter XII, section 8.
32. Comus is on pp. 86-114 of the Merritt Hughes edition.
33. See Chapter IV, section 3 above.
34. For the Biblical significance of cedars see Song of Solomon, Chapter 5, v. 15, and Ezekiel, Chapter 17, v. 22. See also Marvell's 'Bermudas'.
35. Ethel Seaton, "Comus and Shakespeare", Essays and Studies, LXXI (1945), 68-80. See also Leishman, pp. 238-246 for a discussion of Milton's debt to Shakespeare in Comus.
36. 'Lycidas' is on pp. 116-125 in the Merritt Hughes edition.
37. For the pastoral background of the poem see James Holly Hanford, "The Pastoral Elegy and Milton's Lycidas", PMLA, XXV (1910), 403-447; G. Norlin, "The Conventions of Pastoral Elegy", American Journal of Philology, XXXII (1911), 294-312; and Leishman, pp. 256-273.
38. Samuel Johnson, "Milton", Lives of the English Poets, ed. cit., I, 96.
39. See the Book of Job, Chapter 41, v. 18, and Leishman pp. 316-317.
40. James Holly Hanford questioned the correctness of referring to the "rising" of stars, in "The Evening Star in Milton", Modern Language Notes, XXXVII (1922), 444-445. Elmer E. Stoll disputed Hanford's views in "Criticisms Criticized: Spenser and Milton", JEGP, XLI (1942), 451-477.
41. James Holly Hanford, op. cit., n. 37 above, p. 415.

42. Henry Hitch Adams argues that Milton was - perhaps unconsciously - remembering the flower passage in A Winter's Tale, in "The Development of the Flower Passage in 'Lycidas'", Modern Language Notes, LXV, No. 7 (1950), 468-472. W. Lawrence Thompson disagrees, and suggests an alternative source in Jonson's masque, Pan's Anniversary, or, The Shepherd's Holiday, in "The Source of the Flower Passage in 'Lycidas'", Notes and Queries, 197, (March, 1952), 97-99. Leishman gives a comprehensive survey of the background to the passage, pp. 299-309.
43. Christopher Ricks, "Milton: Poems (1645)", English Poetry and Prose: 1540-1674, "Sphere History of Literature in the English Language", Vol. 2, ed. Christopher Ricks (Sphere Books, 1970), p. 267.
44. See above, Chapter V, section 1.
45. John Crowe Ransom, "A Poem Nearly Anonymous" (1933), reprinted in Milton Criticism, ed. James Thorpe (London, Routledge Paperback, 1965), p. 233.

Chapter VIII

Robert Herrick

Robert Herrick was born in 1591 and died in 1674. His single volume of poetry, comprising Hesperides and Noble Numbers (dated 1647 on a separate title-page), was published in 1648. The dates of most of the fourteen hundred poems are not known, but many of them must have been written early in his career, for a contemporary reference ranked him with Jonson and Drayton in 1625.¹ From 1630 till 1647, when he was expelled for his Royalist sympathies, he held the living of Dean Prior, an obscure parish in Devonshire. Many more of his poems belong to this period, and celebrate his life in the country. He returned to Dean Prior at the Restoration, and served as vicar there until his death.

His early years were passed in London (he did not go to Cambridge till 1613), and his taste and style were moulded to a considerable extent by the precept and example of Ben Jonson. He has been classified variously as a Son of Ben, a Cavalier, a "Renaissance neo-pagan and belated Elizabethan",² a "true lyric poet and the last of the Elizabethans".³ But although there is some justification for each of these labels, the deceptive simplicity of his verse is a vehicle for a wider range of subject-matter, and for a more complex approach to both art and life, than any of them alone suggests.⁴ While many of his younger contemporaries in the 1630s and 1640s were under the dual influence of Jonson and Donne, he remained aloof from the vogue of the "metaphysical" style, and looked back to the sensuousness

and pure lyricism of the Elizabethans, and through Jonson to the classical poets Horace, Tibullus, Propertius, Anacreon, and the Greek Anthology.⁵ When Hesperides was printed he was fifty-seven, and his work was already decidedly old-fashioned. But although Herrick has little contact with the literary and intellectual forces that were shaping the future poetic treatment of nature, his verses are rich in natural detail. Besides employing traditional images with an unusually vivid sense of their physical qualities, he had a sympathy for the creatures of the countryside - especially for flowers - and an eye for the minuter appearances of nature, which earn him an important place in this study.

Herrick is not a poet of ideas; he seems to have approached nature not as a great philosophic concept - as the Book of God, or the Chain of Being, or the various manifestations of the One - but as a series of separate items, each with its individual characteristics, and each with its individual comment to make on the human condition. John Press has described him as a man "whose response to the world is immediate and intuitive rather than deeply considered and analytical".⁶ Much of his material - both theme and image - is literary in origin, but it is given a new freshness and relevance by his instinctive grasp of the reality behind the convention. Sensuousness is the quality which transfigures the trivial and commonplace into vital, and often serious, poetry.

1. Sensuousness and Fancy.

This sensuousness can serve more than one purpose. A considerable

number of Herrick's poems aim at nothing more than the celebration, usually through natural imagery, of the physical perfections of a woman. The standard metaphors of the Cavalier love-lyric⁷ provide the basis for many slight pieces. The redness of a lady's cheek is compared to a rosebud,⁸ a carnation,⁹ a cherry,¹⁰ or to a whole collection of natural objects.¹¹ A manuscript piece, 'The Descripcōn of a Woman' (pp. 404-6), brings together a whole catalogue of conventional images: tresses like the sun, eyes like stars, cheeks like a garden of roses, carnations, and lilies, lips like cherries, teeth like pearls, a swan-like neck, breasts like mounds of snow topped with rosebuds, shoulders like ivory. Such images are the stock-in-trade of the more sensual Caroline lyricists, but few poets use them with so obvious a relish of their exquisite appeal to the senses.

Elsewhere, Herrick calls on less hackneyed images to express his pleasure in the physical appearance of woman. 'Upon her feet', for example, exists only to capture in the permanence of verse a fleeting and delicate observation:-

Her pretty feet
Like snailles did creep
A little out, and then,
As if they started at Ho-peep,
Did soon draw in agen.
(p. 194)

The care which Herrick was prepared to lavish on a charming trifle like this - to make the very movement of the lines expand and contract with the meaning - is the mark of the pure artist, of the man for whom the smallest details were worth recording with all the

skill at his disposal. Similar care and delicacy of observation are evident in the last image of this stanza from 'To Julia, in her Dawn, or Day-breake':-

If blush thou must, then blush thou through
 A Lawn, that thou mayst looke
 As purest Pearles, or Pebles do
 When peeping through a Brooke.
 (p. 271)

The simile of the pebbles is not like the conventional similes of rose and cherry, which get their effect more from their literary associations than from their visual suggestiveness. Nor is it like the snail image of the previous poem, which pleases by its aptness as a description of the lady's feet. The image here is much more attractive in itself - as something seen and enjoyed. It is not, like the other sensuous images, descriptive of the actual appearance of Julia, but is offered as a charming visual experience which she is exhorted to emulate.

A different sense is alerted in the evocation of the bride in 'A Nuptiall Song, or Epithalamie, on Sir Clipseby Crew and his Lady':-

Then come on, come on, and yeeld
 A savour like unto a blessed field,
 When the bedabled Morne
 washes the golden eares of corne.
 (p. 112)

Once again, this is not an account of what the lady is like, nor the ingenious reworking of a traditional image. An observed natural phenomenon is used to suggest the kind of delight that a poetic heroine can afford the senses. The emphasis is thrown on to the image itself.

Herrick's fairy poems provide a charming vehicle for some of his more delicate perceptions of the beauty of natural objects. A satire on the trappings of Roman Catholicism includes among the many tiny ornaments of 'The Temple' of the fairies a "Fairie-Psalter,/ Grac't with the Trout-flies curious wings", the "Silver-light of snails", and the fringe of an alter-cloth which:-

Is Spangle-work of trembling dew,
Which, gently gleaming, makes a show,
Like Frost-work glitt'ring on the Snow.
(p. 92)

'Oberons Palace' (pp. 165-8) is similarly decorated, with twinkling lights which shine "like those mites/Of Candi'd dew in Moony nights", with "brownest Toadstones, and the Gum/That shines upon the blewer Plum", with (again) the "Trout-/flies curious wings". The "Sweet Aires" of the place are:-

more divine
Made by the breath of great-ey'd kine,
Who as they lowe empearl with milk
The four-leav'd grasse, or mosse like silk.

And it is lit by:-

The glow-wormes eyes; the shining scales
Of silv'rie fish; wheat-strawes, the snailles
Soft Candle-light; the Kitling's eyne;
Corrupted wood.

Many of Herrick's poems which deal with details from nature - almost always flowers - are the result not of observation or a sensuous response to the physical world, but of pure fancy. In the work of the more serious metaphysicals - Donne, Herbert, King, Marvell - wit is an instrument of thought, a means of exploring and

defining reality; the lesser men - John Hall, Cleveland, Revett - often cultivate wit for its own sake, but it is a wit that is fantastic and violent in its ingenuity; the play of wit in Herrick's verse is more delicate and fanciful, deriving not from Donne but from the lyrics of the Greek Anthology and the Metamorphoses of Ovid. It is essentially an end rather than a means, or rather, it is a means which has as its end the fashioning of a tiny miniature work of art with no relevance to anything outside the world of its own artifice.

One group of poems toys with the colours or names of flowers. They can be divided into two sorts: those which recount an Ovidian metamorphosis, from maidens to plants; and those which explain how the flower has altered its appearance, more in the manner of a Just-so story. Typical of the Ovidian kind is the piece entitled 'How Pansies or Heart-ease came first':-

Frollick Virgins once these were,
Overloving, (living here:)
Being here their ends deny'd/Ran for Sweet-hearts mad, and dy'd.
Love in pitie of their teares,
And their losse in blooming yeares;
For their restlesse here-spent-houres,
Gave them Hearts-ease turn'd to Flow'rs.¹²

The second kind is exemplified by 'How Violets came blew':-

Love on a day (wise Poets tell)
Some time in wrangling spent,
Whether the Violets sho'd excell,
Or she, in sweetest scent.

But Venus having lost the day,
Poore Girles, she fell on you;
And beat ye so, (as some dare say)
Her blowes did make ye blew.

(p. 105)

The coy remarks in parentheses emphasise the fact that these poems are nothing more serious than a sophisticated game with words and images. In 'How Roses came red' (p. 105), we learn how the original white roses blushed at the sight of the purer whiteness of "my Sapho's breast", and ever since, "(beleeve the rest)/The Roses first came red".¹³ 'The Rose' gives a religious turn to the "Just-so" type:-

Before Mans fall, the Rose was born
 (S. Ambrose sayes) without the Thorn:
 But, for Mans fault, then was the Thorn,
 without the fragrant Rose-bud, born;
 But ne're the Rose without the Thorn.
 (p. 396)

Here the poet uses his image to make a comment - though a simple and trite one - on the nature of life. But the poetic appeal is to the same area of the imagination as the secular pieces which contain no reference to any experience extrinsic to their own art.

Other poems contrive a number of fanciful situations involving flowers. In 'To the Rose' (p. 98), for example, which begins "Goe happy Rose", the poet sends the flowers as an ambassador to declare love to his mistress, much as Waller does in the more famous "Go, lovely rose". 'The Funerall Rites of the Rose' (p. 237) depicts, in doubtful taste, the religious rites that accompany the interment of the dead flower.¹⁴

A poet of Herrick's character, writing when he did, was bound to be attracted to one of the favourite conceits of the age - that of sentient nature responding to the whims of the lover and the beauty of the beloved. In 'To Sycamores' (p. 158), for instance,

the despondent lover lies in the shade, and listens to the trees
 "sigh, and sob, and keep/Time with the tears, that I do weep".
 'Upon Julias Recovery' (p. 7), 'The sadnesse of things for Sapho's
 sicknesse' (p. 41), and 'To Anthea' (p. 320) all tell of the
 sympathetic reactions of flowers to the health of the poet's lady.
 These poems are clearly related to the topos of the pastoral
 hyperbole. Another poem, found in manuscript, but not printed by
 Herrick, accords more fully with the tradition:¹⁵ it is called
 'To a Mayd':-

Fayre Mayd, you did but cast your eyes erewhile
 your ripening eyes
 Upon a Banke of Camomile,
 And straight a blushing Birth
 Of Strawberryes
 began to smile
 and all to gild the earth.

Would you have Cherry harvest here
 still last? then doe no more
 but kisse yon Sicamore
 that Mirtle, or that Bay;
 And Cherries will appeare
 not onely ripe for that one day
 but dangling all the yeare.
 (p. 419)

In most of these poems of fancy, the natural details are not
 descriptive, nor do they function as vehicles for meaning. They
 are simply the pretty excuses for a display of ingenuity and
 artistry which is its own justification.

Three poems employ the device used by Donne in "Go and catch
 a falling star", of expressing the uniqueness of some fact or
 experience by setting it against a series of impossibilities.
 Ingenuity is again the chief ingredient, but one can discern behind

the play of fancy some of Herrick's deeper preoccupations. The first, 'His Protestation to Perilla' (p. 59), merely declares that opposites must unite - noon and midnight, fire and water, summer and winter, corn ripening in snow - before he will be false to his vow. The second, 'Impossibilities to his friend', is more interesting:-

My faithful friend, if you can see
The Fruit to grow up, or the Tree:
If you can see the colour come
Into the blushing Peare, or Plum:
If you can see the water grow
To cakes of Ice, or flakes of Snow:
If you can see, that drop of raine
Lost in the wild sea, once againe:
If you can see, how Dreams do creep
Into the Brain by easie sleep:
Then there is hope that you may see
Her love me once, who now hates me.
(p. 79)

Herrick's intuitive and sensuous response to the world of sights and sounds and smells brought home to him the mutability that governs all physical things. He delighted in the imperceptible changes that are constantly taking place - in the ripening and colouring of the fruit and the slow growth of the tree; in the film of ice that forms gradually and unseen upon the water; in the mingling of the individual drop of rain in the vast mass of the ocean. The third poem uses the device to demonstrate the folly of attempting 'To finde God':-

Beigh me the Fire; or, canst thou find
A way to measure out the wind;
Distinguish all those Floods that are
Mixt in that watric Theater;
And tast thou them as saltlesse there,
As in their Channell first they were.

Tell me the People that do keep
 within the Kingdoms of the Deep;
 Or fetch me back that Cloud againe,
 Beshiver'd into seeds of Raine;
 Tell me the motes, dust, sands, and speares
 Of Corn, when Summer shakes his eares;
 Shew me that world of Starres, and whence
 They noiselesse spill their Influence:
 This if thou canst; then shew me Him
 That rides the glorious Cherubim.
 (pp. 339-340)

The infinite number and variety of created objects is suggested here - the seas and their inhabitants, the tiny particles blowing about the earth, the wind itself that blows them, the great "world of Starres". But beyond this, there is a sense of the fleetingness of each fragment of existence, as it is whirled irretrievably away by the cycle of change: the fresh stream loses its identity in the salty expanse of the sea; the cloud condenses and can never be fetched back exactly as it was; summer "shakes his eares" and the corn falls, like the "seeds of Raine", both of which have their unique place in the cycle, as an end of one process and the beginning of another; the stars shed their influence on human destiny once and for all. Such "immediate and intuitive" responses to the features of the natural universe are not the subject of these poems. One is about the impossibility of the lover's mistress relenting towards him, and the other is about the impossibility of meeting God face to face. But in seeking images from nature to express these impossibilities, Herrick draws upon his instinctive awareness of certain aspects of the sensible world. In other poems we shall see him confronting more directly the problems inherent in the imagery he uses here.

2. Traditional Symbols and Stock Conceits.

When Herrick turns to the expression of human experience, he has the whole array of stock nature images ready to hand. The willow as a symbol of forlorn love;¹⁶ the laurel as a symbol of poetic immortality;¹⁷ the olive standing for peace;¹⁸ the vine climbing up the elm as an emblem of trust and dependence;¹⁹ the heliotrope standing for constancy.²⁰ Two aspects of the bud imagery discussed in Chapter V, section 1 above, are invoked by Herrick: one in an epitaph 'Upon a child that dyed', which begins:-

Here she lies, a pretty bud,
Lately made of flesh and blood;
(p. 123)

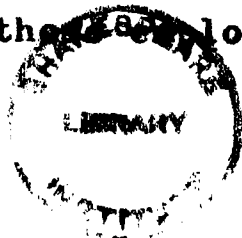
and one in an epigram on 'The Virgin Mary':-

To work a wonder, God would have her shown,
At once, a Bud, and yet a Rose full-blowne.
(p. 384)

The Petrarchan conceit of the freezing and burning torments of love appears in 'The Frozen Heart', (p. 8), 'The frozen Zone: or, Julia disdainfull' (p. 40), and 'Upon himselfe' (p. 290). The first of these is representative of the way this kind of imagery is used to express the lover's state of mind:-

I freeze, I freeze, and nothing dwells
In me but Snow, and ysicles.
For pitties sake give your advice,
To melt this snow, and thaw this ice;
I'll drink down Flames, but if so be
Nothing but love can supple me;
I'll rather keepe this frost, and snow,
Then to be thaw'd, or heated so.

Although secular here, the analogy between weather and human experience is similar to that employed by Joseph Beaumont and



Mildmay Fane and other disciples of George Herbert.²¹ Herrick

himself uses it in a spiritual sense in his epigram 'The Lamp':-

When a mans Faith is frozen up, as dead;
Then is the Lamp and oyle extinguished.
(p. 359)

The Noble Numbers bear several marks of influence from the tradition of devotional verse stemming from George Herbert. A recent critic goes too far in his claim that, "Of the disciples of John Donne, only George Herbert excels Herrick in devotional verse".²² Nevertheless, such a poem as 'The goodnesse of his God' obviously owes a lot to the example of the greater poet, and is not unworthy to stand beside the minor work of others in the tradition:-

When Winds and Seas do rage,
And threaten to undo me,
Thou dost their wrath assuage
If I but call unto Thee.

A mighty storm last night
Did seek my soule to swallow,
But by the peep of light
A gentle calme did follow.

What need I then despaire,
Though illls stand round about me;
Since mischiefs neither dare
To bark, or bite, without Thee?
(p. 373)

Other poems employ the plant imagery that was used to such fine effect by Beaumont and Vaughan. 'To God, on his sicknesse' ends with the couplet:-

Yet I have hope, by Thy great power,
To spring; though now a wither'd flower.
(p. 361)

And another piece addressed 'To God' develops around the conceit:-

Lord, I am like to Mistletoe,
 Which has no root, and cannot grow,
 Or prosper, but by that same tree
 It clings about.

(p. 371)

3. Images of Change.

Herrick does not always confine himself to established symbolism when he uses natural imagery as an analogue to human experience. The opening lines of the epithalamium for Sir Clipseby Crew describe the effect made by the approach of the bride in an image which captures the quality of a spring morning:-

What's that we see from far? the spring of Day
 Bloom'd from the East, or faire Injewel'd May
 Blowne out of April.

(p. 112)

This is not so much exact observation of physical detail as precision of sensibility. Like Keats, Herrick can perceive, with his whole being rather than with any single sense, "the feel of May".²³ The two images of dawn and spring are fused in the brilliant compression of the language. The day opens like a flower; May is "Injewel'd" - with flowers and buds, according to conventional diction, but also with the dew of early morning associated with the previous image; and it is "Blowne" out of April - that is wafted by the fresh breeze of spring, or, taking up the suggestion of the earlier image, blooming with flowers. One must always be ready to discover, behind the apparent simplicity of Herrick's phrasing, the cunning skill of a consummate artist with words and images.

A brief poem on 'Lovers how they come and part' turns on a similar magical apprehension of the subtle changes that are continually

taking place in the surface that nature presents to the human senses:-

A Gyges Ring they beare about them still,
To be, and not seen when and where they will.
They tread on clouds, and though they sometimes fall,
They fall like dew, but make no noise at all.
So silently they one to th'other come,
As colours steale into the Peare or Plum,
And Aire-like, leave no pression to be seen
Where e're they met, or parting place has been.
(p. 250)

The colours "steale into the Peare or Plum" imperceptibly, as May is blown out of April; and, the final phrase of the poem reminds us, as imperceptibly they disappear. The image which occurs elsewhere as a simple parallel to the "impossibility" of the mistress's surrender, is here set in a context which releases its significance. The meeting and parting of lovers, like the secret coming and fading of the fruits' hue, is part of a natural process that involves every living thing. All is mutable and transient, and the senses which are our means of apprehending the joyous world of sight and sound, are also our means of recognizing loss and decay. The changes which they perceive are themselves a profound comment on the nature of existence.

A similar effect is achieved in 'The coming of good luck':-

So Good-luck came, and on my rooffe did light,
Like noyse-lesse Snow; or as the dew of night:
Not all at once, but gently, as the trees
Are, by the Sun-beams, tickel'd by degrees.
(p. 100)

The details of snow and dew are ordinary enough, though they serve to reinforce the general sense of the subtle changes that are

continually being wrought all around us. The most remarkable image, however, is that of the second couplet, which reveals that intuitive grasp of the life in natural objects noted in the previous poem. The reference to the tree responding to the sunshine has an empathic quality similar to that of some of Vaughan's finest pieces.

4. Flowers, Time, and Transience.

The hints of more serious themes in the poetry discussed so far have been incidental to the main concerns of the poems. Herrick's imagery has offered glimpses of his attitude to nature, and of his interpretation of man's position in the natural scheme, but its implications have not been brought out. In the many pieces addressed to flowers, he brings these more serious themes into prominence. 'To Primroses fill'd with morning-dew' indicates the tone of many of his contemplations, and provides a further instance of the empathy which colours his approach to particular natural details:-

Why doe ye weep, sweet Babes? can Tears
 Speake griefe in you,
 Who were but borne
 Just as the modest Morne
 Teem'd her refreshing dew?
 Alas you have not known that shower,
 That marres a flower;
 Nor felt th'unkind
 Breath of a blasting wind;
 Nor are ye worne with yeares;
 Or warpt, as we,
 Who think it strange to see,
 Such pretty flowers, (like to Orphans young)
 To speak by Teares, before ye have a Tongue.

Speak, whimp'ring Younglings, and make known
 The reason, why
 Ye droop, and weep;
 Is it for want of sleep?
 Or childish Lullabie?

Or that ye have not seen as yet
 The Violet?
 Or brought a kisse
 From that Sweet-heart, to this?
 No, no, this sorrow shown
 By your teares shed,
 wo'd have this Lecture read,
 That things of greatest, so of meanest worth,
 Conceiv'd with grief are, and with teares brought forth.
 (pp. 104-105)

The poem is based on two conceits - that the flowers are "Babes", and that the drops of dew are tears - and its technique is borrowed from the emblem books: the primroses are evoked in the opening lines, and in the closing lines a lesson, or "Lecture", is read from them. But the most interesting part is the central section, in which the poet meditates on the causes of the weeping. In the first stanza, he contrasts the innocence of the infant-flowers, not yet "warpt" by experience, with the grown man's endurance of the whips and scorns of time. The word "Alas" gives the key to his sentiments: he laments both his own suffering, as a representative human being "worne with yeares", and the inevitable "shower" and "blasting wind" that lie in wait to mar new-born creatures. These are the real earthly causes of sorrow. But, he wonders in the second stanza, perhaps the primroses know only the trivial griefs of childhood - the want of sleep, the need for soothing song, the denial of simple pleasures of the senses. The conclusion reveals that the babe image has been misleading: unlike the human infant, the primrose knows instinctively at the very moment of its birth what man only learns from bitter experience - "sunt lachrymae rerum". The extraordinary feature of the poem is that Herrick is not simply

using the natural image of the weeping and fragile flowers to direct attention to the sorrow of the human world; he feels as much sorrow for the primroses themselves, and intuitively guesses at their own sorrow. Man and flower are put on an equal footing as parts of a single process of nature.

Roger B. Rollin, in a recent study of Herrick, declares that the contemplation of nature confirmed the poet in certain fundamental insights:-

that "Times trans-shifting" rules over Nature and, as a consequence, all things decay and die; that since man is a part of living Nature, it is inevitable that he share in this fate; and finally, that this fate prevents man, and to an extent, all living things, from achieving their complete fulfilment.²⁴

None of these is remarkable for originality: they are, indeed, the commonplaces of pastoral, and of classical and Renaissance lyrics. Herrick is not one of those poets who explore unmapped areas of human experience. His achievement is that, time and again, he can return to familiar themes, and invest them with a fresh sense of urgency and pathos. The lessons that he derives from a rosebud, a daffodil, or a primrose may not be exceptional, but they are saved from being facile by his intense feeling for the beauty and fragility of all living things. The best poems in Hesperides, and the success of the volume as a whole, arises from a tension between the ideas of transience and change, and the vivid sensuous experience of the present moment.

Herrick's numerous treatments of the theme of "Times trans-shifting" are pitched in more than one key, and reveal a subtle

awareness of the complex human relationship with a universe of change. The emblematic 'Divination by a Daffadill' is a dispassionate account of the bare facts:-

When a Daffadill I see,
Hanging down his head t'wards me;
Guesse I may, what I must be:
First, I shall decline my head;
Secondly, I shall be dead;
Lastly, safely buried.

(p. 38)

There is no attempt to comment on this train of events. The emphasis of the simple verbs "must" and "shall" allows no sentimentality and no evasion. Only the adverb "safely" contains a hint of acquiescence, and even of comfort, in the finality of the ultimate oblivion.

'To Cherry-blossomes' concentrates on the natural detail, instead of diverting attention to man, and takes the examination of mutability a stage further:-

Ye may simper, blush, and smile,
And perfume the aire a while:
But (sweet things) ye must be gone;
Fruit, ye know, is comming on:
Then, Ah! Then, where is your grace,
When as Cherries come in place?

(p. 74)

Herrick values the brief existence of these "sweet things", which charm the senses for a moment, but then "must be gone". But their going is not only the end of one delightful fragment of life, it is also the beginning of another. Even while the blossoms are spreading abroad their fragrance, and smiling upon the world, the fruit "is comming on", and very soon the cherries will be "in place", to make their own contribution to the sensuous perfection of the eternal present.

Whereas many of these poems express a single mood, or record a momentary insight, 'To Blossoms' is about a more complex experience, in which the speaker's attitude to the natural phenomenon undergoes a change:-

Faire pledges of a fruitfull Tree,
 Why do yee fall so fast?
 Your date is not so past;
 But you may stay yet here a while,
 To blush and gently smile;
 And go at last.

What, were yee borne to be
 An houre or half's delight;
 And so to bid goodnight?
 'Twas pitie Nature brought yee forth
 Meerly to shew your worth,
 And lose you quite.

But you are lovely Leaves, where we
 May read how soon things have
 Their end, though ne'r so brave:
 And after they have shown their pride,
 Like you a while: They glide
 Into the Grave.

(p. 176)

At first he questions the wisdom of the order which seems to mock at the beauty which it brings forth. What is the point of creating loveliness merely to tease the senses of the beholder by snatching it away again? But the very words he uses to address the blossoms - "Faire pledges" - imply an answer to the questions he asks: they are a promise of fruit in the future. In the third stanza, the speaker recognizes that he has been misled by heeding only his senses, which experience only pain at the loss of beauty. If he allows his mind to interpret the evidence that they afford, he will see that they are "lovely" leaves in more than one respect. Besides

showing the "pride" of their splendour to the admiring world, they also point a moral: "how soon things have/Their end". As the altered mood of the conclusion indicates, those who can "read" this moral can come to terms with their own mortality: they too can "glide" - smoothly and effortlessly - into the grave.

Rollin has remarked that this "is less a poem about blossoms than it is about a state of mind and the changes that a particular insight can bring to that state".²⁵ The same could be said about most of Herrick's flower-transience poems. The reader gathers from his verses little idea of what the primrose, or the daffodil, or the cherry-blossom looks like. But one does feel that he possessed a sensibility which responded to the flowers that fill his pages much more genuinely than many of his contemporaries who apostrophized the rose or the lily. The fate of the fading blossom is more to him than a literary convention. If he was not concerned with the precise physical details of the particular flower, he was deeply aware that it lived in its own right and was not simply a convenient symbol. The fate of flowers almost invariably suggests the fate of humanity not because "the proper study of mankind is man", but because flower and man are caught up in the same inevitable processes of nature.

One of his loveliest poems, 'To Daffadills', captures this sense of sympathetic identification:-

Faire Daffadills, we weep to see
 You haste away so soone:
 As yet the early-rising Sun

Has not attain'd his Noone.
 Stay, stay,
 Untill the hasting day
 Has run
 But to the Even-song;
 And, having pray'd together, we
 Will goe with you along.

We have short time to stay, as you,
 We have as short a Spring;
 As quick a growth to meet Decay,
 As you, or any thing.
 We die,
 As your hours doe, and drie
 Away,
 Like to the Summers raine;
 Or as the pearles of Mornings dew
 Ne'r to be found againe.

(p. 125)

The flowers do not function merely as symbols of man's transience. The poet weeps as much for them as for himself. He associates himself with them in the wish to pray "together". And in the second stanza, he widens his frame of reference to include all things - the daffodils, himself, mankind, "any thing", all grow towards decay each moment of their lives. The phrasing of the third line, with its poignant pun on "quick", and its metaphor of an appointment that has to be kept, suggests that death is the natural fulfilment of the process of growth, and as such a good and proper consummation. The concluding images of summer rain and the pearls of dew balance the fragile beauty of this life against the hopeless finality of the last line. The hints of 'To finde God', 'Lovers how they come and part', and 'The coming of good luck' are here taken up in a context which allows their full implications to emerge. The very uniqueness of each unrepeatable fragment of loveliness is in some way a con-

solation for transience and change.

In another group of poems, Herrick relates the fate of flowers more specifically to the fate of youth - and especially to the youth of woman. 'To Violets' personifies its subject as the "Maids of Honour" of the spring, and the other early blooms as "Virgins many, / Fresh and faire". The piece ends sadly:-

Yet though thus respected,
By and by
Ye doe lie,
Poore Girles, neglected.
(p. 83)

'A Meditation for his Mistresse' likens the lady to a tulip, a July-flower, a "sparkling Rose i'th'bud", a "faire-set Vine", a balm, and a "dainty Violet", all of which foretell her defeat by time. In the last stanza, the poet adds himself to the melancholy train:-

You are the Queen all flowers among,
But die you must (faire Maid) ere long,
As He, the maker of this Song.
(p. 88)

'To Meddowes' (p. 110) works a variation on the theme. The meadows, with their perennial grass, have not themselves decayed, but the flowers and maidens who have "spent their houres" upon them are now no more.

The conclusion of 'Corinna's going a Maying', one of Herrick's greatest poems, brings together images and motifs that have occurred in lyrics already examined, and gives a decisive statement of the transience theme. The last stanza of this poem also introduces one of the favourite seventeenth-century variations of that theme:

"carpe diem".²⁶ Herrick's most famous treatment of this motif is, of course, 'To the Virgins, to make much of Time' (p. 84). Less well-known, and less sprightly, but still a fine version of the theme, is 'To a Bed of Tulips':-

Bright Tulips, we do know,
You had your coming hither;
And Fading-time do's show,
That Ye must quickly wither.

Your Sister-hoods may stay,
And smile here for your houre;
But dye ye must away:
Even as the meanest Flower.

Come Virgins then, and see
Your frailties; and bemone ye;
For lost like these, 'twill be,
As Time had never known ye.

(p. 184)

The rose-buds and tulips, like the virgins, smile and die, and the tulips are "Sister-hoods": flower and human being are essentially the same - beautiful, fresh, frail, and transient - and make their appeal in the same way - to the senses. They are related in the imaginative vision of Herrick's poetry not as symbol and subject, but as equally significant symptoms of the nature of a time-bound universe.

5. Dull Devonshire and Arcadia.

All the natural details examined in this chapter have been more or less isolated from any wider landscape. Individual flowers, the pebbles sparkling in a brook, the smell of a cornfield at dawn, the wings of a trout-fly, the colour of fruit, the glitter of "Frost-work" on snow: all of these appear as metaphors or as objects for

poetic contemplation, but they seldom combine to produce a sense of the countryside at large. Some of the early commentators on Herrick noted this aspect of his response to nature. Edmund Gosse, for example, in his pioneering essay on the poet, remarked that there was "one very curious omission in all his descriptions of nature, in that his landscapes are without background". Although Herrick is "photographically minute" in his record of isolated features of the country scene, his poetry contains no trace of "the beautiful distances of Devonshire, the rocky tors, the rugged line of Dartmoor, the glens in the hills".²⁷ F. M. Moorman quotes Gosse's views, and adds:-

One might go even farther than this, and say that only very exceptionally does Herrick give us landscapes at all. His usual plan is to single out some one feature in the scene before him and concentrate all his attention upon that, steeping it in airy sentiment and embroidering it with quaint poetic fancies.²⁸

While it is correct to say that Herrick does not "describe" the scenery of his parish, he does refer to it in general terms. Such references are always disparaging. One poem in particular expresses the mixed blessings of his situation:-

More discontents I never had
 Since I was born, then here;
 Where I have been, and still am sad,
 In this dull Devon-shire:
 Yet justly too I must confesse;
 I ne'r invented such
 Ennobled numbers for the Presse,
 Then where I loath'd so much.
 (p. 19)

His other Devonshire pieces are about his pleasure at the prospect of returning to the metropolis. One of the poems 'Upon himself'

begins with an inversion of the conventional beatus ille apostrophe, "Come, leave this loathed Country-life", and ends with the hope that cities will love him better than "Granges". (pp. 171-172). The opening lines of 'His returne to London' (p. 242) echo the same sentiments, and a later couplet reveals that a major element in his dislike of Devonshire was homesickness for the scenes of his early life in London. One further poem makes more specific reference to the character of the Devonshire landscape (belying Gosse's statement that there "is not a trace" of this), and suggests that the absence of such references elsewhere can be attributed to aesthetic rather than personal considerations:-

Dean-bourn, farewell; I never look to see
Deane, or thy warty incivility.
 Thy rockie bottome, that doth teare thy streams
 And makes them frantick, ev'n to all extreames;
 To my content, I never sho'd behold,
 Were thy streames silver, or thy rocks all gold.
 Rockie thou art; and rockie we discover
 Thy men; and rockie are thy wayes all over.
 O men, O manners; Now, and ever knowne
 To be A Rockie Generation!
 A people currish; churlish as the seas;
 And rude (almost) as rudest Salvages.
 With whom I did, and may re-sojourne when
 Rockes turn to Rivers, Rivers turn to Men.
 (p. 29)

For Herrick, as for Donne, wild nature disturbs the harmony of the universe - the rocks in the stream-bed are a deformity, the "warts, and pock-holes in the face/Of th'earth".²⁹ They are not only aesthetically unpleasing, they also cause disorder in the things around: they make the flowing waters "frantick", and the people "rude". Rollin sees this poem as an important touchstone of

Herrick's vision of nature and conception of art:-

With its wild "extreames", the river stands for untamed nature; as such, it is the very antithesis of idyllic pastoral nature in which all streams are smooth and silvery. In the eighteenth century, a river like Dean-bourn, with its "rockie bottome", "frantick" currents, and air of "warty incivility", would have been regarded as "picturesque". For Herrick, however, "extreames" of any kind, whether natural or esthetic, threaten the order of existence.³⁰

The pastoral ideal itself informs another autobiographical river-poem, 'His teares to Thamasis' (pp. 315-316), which records his regret at leaving London for the West country. The idyllic Thames is "silver-footed" and "christall", and, far from being deformed, is "beautifi'd" by the "boughes and rushes" that surround it. Everything is calm and orderly. There are no "ruffling winds" to disturb the "pure, and Silver-wristed Naides". Herrick bids the river "keep up your state", and admonishes it never to "make sick your Banks by surfeiting" - there are to be none of the "extreames" that mark the disorderly Dean-bourn. Nature is subdued by the principles of art.

Like all pastoral poets, Herrick created an imaginary realm of beauty and tranquillity by ignoring the harsher aspects of country life. In many pastoral flights of fancy, nature flourishes in eternal springtime.³¹ Herrick attains the same effect by singing, as he says in 'The Argument of his Book', "Of April, May, of June, and July-Flowers" (p. 5). There are only four months in the world of Hesperides:-

First, April, she with mellow showers
 Opens the way for early flowers;
 Then after her comes smiling May
 In a more rich and sweet array:
 Next enters June, and brings us more
 Gems, then those two, that went before:
 Then (lastly) July comes, and she
 More wealth brings in, then all those three.
 (p. 23)

Herrick rarely uses the fiction that this season of warmth and plenty is perpetual. Rather, he exercises the privilege of the artist to select and organize the material provided by reality. He has an ideal - fed by classical literature - of the perfect life of Arcadia, and he selects for poetic treatment only those elements of reality that correspond to it. The poem just quoted - 'The succession of the four sweet months' - contains his central preoccupation with change and growth. Each succeeding month brings a richer profusion of natural wealth. But by the very act of abstracting these months from the rest of the year, and by calling them "the four sweet months", he is throwing his poetic world into relief against the larger world of the other eight months, with their less sweet parts of the cycle of growth and decay.

'The Apparition of his Mistressse calling him to Elizium' gives Herrick an opportunity to display his virtuosity at handling the familiar topos of the eternal spring. His description of the Elizium where he meets the great poets of Greece, Rome, and England is frankly unrealistic, and allows him to give free rein to his sensuous fancy:-

This, that, and ev'ry Thicket doth transpire
 More sweet, then Storax from the hallowed fire:

Where ev'ry tree a wealthy issue beares
 Of fragrant Apples, blushing Plums, or Peares:
 And all the shrubs, with sparkling spangles, shew
 Like Morning-Sun-shine tinsilling the dew.
 Here in green Meddowes sits eternall May,
 Purfling the Margents, while perpetuall Day
 So double gilds the Aire, as that no night
 Can ever rust th'Enamel of the light.
 (pp. 205-206)

Similarly, 'To Phillis to love, and live with him' (pp. 192-193) belongs to another well-established genre,³² which makes free use of the attractions of the countryside, with no regard to the propriety of the seasons. Daisies and daffodils, woodbine, apple, pear, and plum all flourish together in the impossible prodigality of the pastoral invitation to love. The nature of Arcadia - of the golden world of the earth's infancy - is essentially benign, the servant and provider of innocent mankind.

6. The Country Life.

Poised between the realism of the Devonshire poems and the idealism of such pastoral fantasies, are Herrick's "Country Life" poems, which belong to the Horatian movement discussed in an earlier chapter.³³ 'His content in the Country' expresses that element in Herrick's attitude to the retired life which was derived from the Stoicism of Horace. It begins:-

Here, here I live with what my Board,
 Can with the smallest cost afford.
 (p. 200)

Part of the contentment comes from the lack of embroilment with "The Landlord, or the Userer", and part from the delight in solitude for its own sake. 'His Grange, or private wealth' (p. 246)

enumerates the simple possessions that "give my heart some ease" in "my rurall privacie". He concludes his account of his cock, hen, goose, lamb, cat, and spaniel with the cheerful acceptance that "where care/None is, slight things do lightly please". The same enjoyment of innocent material pleasures informs one of the Noble Numbers: 'A Thanksgiving to God, for his House' (pp. 349-351).

In other poems, Herrick takes a more positive interest in the activities of the countryside. He celebrates the seasonal festivals of his rustic parishioners, and the stable social relationship between the lord and his tenants.³⁴ 'A Panegerick to Sir Lewis Pemberton' (pp. 146-149) praises the hospitality and virtuous life of the ideal landowner, as Jonson had praised Sir Robert Wroth and Marvell was to praise Lord Fairfax. 'The Hock-Cart, or Harvest Home: To the Right Honourable, Mildmay, Earle of Westmorland' (pp. 101-102) combines the two themes of country merry-making and feudal hierarchy. The opening lines indicate the poet's central concerns:-

Come Sons of Summer, by whose toile,
We are the Lords of Wine and Oile:
By whose tough labours, and rough hands,
We rip up first, then reap our lands.
Crown'd with the eares of corne, now come,
And, to the Pipe, sing Harvest home.
Come forth, my Lord, and see the Cart
Drest up with all the Country Art.

The ruling aristocracy, with whom Herrick identifies himself, and the labourers, co-operate with each other and with nature, in achieving a satisfactory completion of the agricultural cycle.

Through the exertions of the rustics, "we" - the ruling classes who own the land - tame nature and benefit from its fruitfulness. The gulf between the "Sons of Summer" - by the very phrasing closely linked to the natural processes - and the Lords who hold nature's treasury in trust is bridged in the ritual of the harvest home. Neither could perform their parts in the divinely ordained order without the other. This sense of inter-dependence is stressed later in the command: "Feed him ye must, whose food fills you". The annual merriment has strong overtones of pagan religion which reinforce the social ritual:-

Some blesse the Cart; some kisse the sheaves;
 Some prank them up with Oaken leaves:
 Some crosse the Fill-horse; some with great
 Devotion, stroak the home-borne wheat.

And in the final lines, the social and religious aspects of the event are gathered up into the great natural cycle of growth and fruition that subsumes the merely human hierarchies:-

And that this pleasure is like raine,
 Not sent ye for to drowne your paine,
 But for to make it spring againe.

Herrick's imagination was stirred by this ritualistic human relationship with nature, as it was stirred by the sense of identification with the transience of flowers. He found, in the time-honoured ceremonies of the countryside, where man and season worked hand in hand, the compromise between the "warty incivility" of Devonshire and the fantasy of Arcadia that his art was seeking. The rituals of country-folk occur time and again in his poetry, and

Herrick's degree of involvement varies. In the poem just discussed, he is aware that he is to some extent an outsider. While the reapers frolic, he and the Earl of Westmorland look on, slightly superior to the "Country Art" that decorates the harvest-wagon, and the survival of pagan attitudes in the rustics. In 'The Wake' (p. 255), he and "Anthea" go to the feast to be entertained, and laugh indulgently at the narrow horizons and simple delights of the villagers. But even in 'The Hock-Cart', Herrick feels the power of the ceremonies from which he holds a little aloof. Elsewhere, he allows himself to abandon his imagination more completely to the spirit of the rituals. He offers the following temptation to "Phyllis":-

At Sheering-times, and yearely Wakes,
 When Themilis his pastime makes,
 There thou shalt be; and be the wit,
 Nay more, the Feast, and grace of it.
 On Holy-dayes, when Virgins meet
 To dance the Heyes with nimble feet;
 Thou shalt come forth, and then appeare
 The Queen of Roses for that yeere.
 And having danc't ('bove all the best)
 Carry the Garland from the rest.
 (p. 192)

And the finest of all his poems celebrates the survival of the ancient spring fertility festival in a Carpe diem context: 'Corinna's going a Maying' (pp. 67-69) effects an identification, through country ritual, of the human and the natural, the world of art and the world of nature. Corinna is transformed by the imagery into Flora herself, the personification of fertility and spring freshness:-

Rise; and put on your Foliage, and be seene

To come forth, like the Spring-time, fresh and greene;
 And sweet as Flora. Take no care
 For Jewels for your Gowne, or Haire:
 Feare not; the leaves will strew
 Gemms in abundance upon you.

The ceremonial decorating of the buildings with greenery and blossoms resolves the antagonism between city and country, blurring the distinction between the artificial and the natural. Everything is brought into harmony by the rituals of May Morning. Herrick uses the appeal of the season as an argument for the enjoyment of love, which is the force that drives both the human and the plant creation towards fulfilment of the natural order. But his invocation of the rituals is not merely a piece of witty sophistry. 'Corinna's going a Maying' transcends the simple Carpe diem genre. It is a profound comment not only on time and mortality, but also on man's need to come to terms with the relationship which ties him to his environment. Herrick recognized, in the survival of the pagan rituals, an outward expression of the fulfilment of that need.

Two poems give a wider account of the good life in the country. The first, addressed to his brother, Thomas Herrick (pp. 34-38), sets out a philosophy of retirement, but contains few natural details. Most of the advantages of the country life are ethical, but in one passage Herrick suggests the pleasures that rural scenes afford the senses and the imagination:-

The Damaskt medowes, and the peebly streames
 Sweeten, and make soft your dreames:
 The Purling springs, groves, birds, and well-weav'd Bowrs,
 With fields enameled with flowers,
 Present their shapes; while fantasie discloses
 Millions of Lillies mixt with Roses.

Then dream, ye heare the Lamb by many a bleat
 Woo'd to come suck the milkie Teat:
 While Faunus in the Vision comes to keep,
 From rav'ning wolves, the fleecie sheep.
 With thousand such enchanting dreams, that meet
 To make sleep not so sound, as sweet.³⁵

The second, 'The Country life, to the honoured M. End. Porter, Groome of the Bed-Chamber to His Maj.' (pp. 229-231), concentrates more on this aspect of retired pleasure - the objects which "present their shapes" to the senses of the observer. The poem begins with the customary contrast between the personal liberty of retirement and the enslavement to greed and ambition of the Active Man; but it soon shifts to the country scenes and activities that fill the day of the Happy Man, who "walk'st about thine own dear bounds,/Not envying others larger grounds". Within the framework of the tour of the estate,³⁶ Herrick produces the nearest thing in his work to a landscape poem. But even here, there is no grasp of a total scene; no comprehensive picture of a particular stretch of countryside is set before us. F.W. Moorman remarks that although "he spreads a wide vista" to the reader's view, "his method is to call up a succession of small pictures, instead of resolving these into one large, well-ordered landscape".³⁷ The most striking resemblance, as Moorman notes, is to Milton's 'L'Allegro'. The first vignette is of the ploughman who, like Milton's, whistles at his work. The "wise Master", combining business with pleasure, then passes on to inspect his grazing cattle:-

This done, then to th'enameld Meads
 Thou go'st; and as thy foot there treads,

Thou seest a present God-like Power
 Imprinted in each Herbe and Flower.
 And smell'st the breath of great-ey'd Kine,
 Sweet as the blossomes of the Vine.
 Here thou behold'st thy large sleek Neat
 Unto the Dew-laps up in meat:
 And, as thou look'st, the wanton Steere,
 The Heifer, Cow, and Oxe draw neere
 To make a pleasing pastime there.

The ambiguity of the first four lines is intriguing. Herrick appears to mean simply that, as lord of the estate and of all it contains, the Happy Man has a "God-like Power" over the very plants that he presses beneath his feet. But he may be suggesting, as Casimire, Fane, and Vaughan certainly suggest, that the power of the creator is perceptible in the meanest of His creatures; that the retired life conduces to the contemplation of the great mysteries of life. In the latter part of the passage, it is clear that the Beatus Vir is as much delighted by the "pleasing pastime" of surveying his beasts, as by more esoteric pursuits. The tour of the estate continues with a visit to the hillside where the sheep are tended by a piping shepherd. Turning next to more general amusements, Herrick reveals his deeper interest in what Milton refers to merely as "a sunshine holiday". He runs through a whole list of rural festivities:-

Thy Wakes, thy Quintels, here thou hast,
 Thy May-poles too with Garlands grac't:
 Thy Morris-dance; thy Whitsun-ale;
 Thy Sheering-feast, which never faile.
 Thy Harvest home; thy Wassaile bowle,
 That's tost up after Fox i'th'Hole.
 Thy Mummeries; thy Twelfe-tide Kings
 And Queenes; thy Christmas revellings.

After a short account of the pleasures of hunting the hare, the

lark, and the pheasant, he rounds off the rural day that began with cock-crow with the "sweet sleep" that rewards innocence.

7. Conclusion.

The pages of Hesperides are filled with images from nature. Many are culled from literature, and remain as mere literary symbols; many are fanciful and insubstantial; but many create a strikingly rich and precise sensuous impression, and become the means of approaching serious questions about life and art. Not that Herrick was a poet with a philosophical programme to impart. He rarely wrote at length, and then rarely adopted the medium of argument or instruction. As Professor Røstvig has said:-

Like Milton, Herrick did not content himself with philosophic arguments about happiness; he preferred to describe delightful scenes of rustic merriment.³⁸

In many cases he did not even describe the object of his contemplation - he simply evoked its significance through the expression of his sympathy for it and for the quality of existence that it illuminated for him. His attitudes to the great central problems of time and mutability, of man and his relationship with the universe, of the good life, can be gathered from the entire corpus of his work, rather than from any isolated statements of his position. Hesperides needs to be read as a whole. The lyrics taken singly can give a false impression of simplicity. The flower poems, with their different approaches to the theme of transience; the pastorals; the Devonshire poems; the country life pieces: all these together provide a complex and haunting commentary on man, nature, and art, achieved largely through the medium of natural imagery.

NOTES

1. See the introduction to The Poetical Works of Robert Herrick, ed. L.C. Martin (Oxford, 1956), p. xvii. All quotations of Herrick's poems are taken from this edition.
2. Douglas Bush, English Literature in the Earlier Seventeenth Century: 1600-1660, "Oxford History of English Literature", Vol. V, 2nd ed. (Oxford, 1962), p. 115.
3. Maren-Sofie Røstvig, The Happy Man, 2nd ed. (New York, 1962), I, p. 114.
4. See the thesis proposed by Roger B. Rollin, Robert Herrick, "Twayne's English Authors Series" (New York, 1966).
5. For the classical influence on Herrick see Pauline Aiken, "The Influence of the Latin Elegists on English Lyric Poetry, 1600-1650, with Particular Reference to the Works of Robert Herrick", University of Maine Studies, Second Series, No. 22 (1932); Kathryn McEuen, Classical Influence upon the Tribe of Ben (Cedar Rapids, Iowa, 1939); G.W. Regenos, "The Influence of Horace on Robert Herrick", Philological Quarterly, XXVI (1947), 268-284.
6. John Press, Robert Herrick, "Writers and their Work", No. 132 (London, 1961), p. 25.
7. See above, Chapter V, Section 6.
8. See the following poems in Martin's edition: 'The Rosarie' (p. 18), 'To a Gentlewoman objecting to him his gray haire' (p. 63), and 'Mrs. Eliz. Wheeler, under the name of the lost Shepardesse' (pp. 106-107).
9. See 'To a Gentlewoman' (p. 63), 'To Carnations' (p. 83), 'Mrs. Eliz. Wheeler' (pp. 106-107).
10. See 'Cherrie-ripe' (pp. 19-20), 'Upon Mistresse Susanna Southwell her cheeks' (p. 193).
11. See 'The Maiden-blush' (p. 268), and 'Upon the Nipples of Julia's Breast' (p. 164).
12. This is on p. 152; see also 'How the Wall-flower came first, and why so called' (p. 14), 'How Primroses came green' (p. 64), and 'How Marigolds came yellow' (p. 187).
13. See also another lyric with the title 'How Roses came red' (p. 241), 'How Lillies came white' (p. 74). In the same fanciful vein is the conceit of 'On Gelli-flowers begotten' (p. 74), which describes how two gillyflowers "fell but now/From that warme kisse of ours".
14. See also 'To Carnations' (p. 83), and 'The Parliament of Roses to Julia' (p. 8).
15. See Appendix C.
16. See 'To the Willow-tree' (p. 106).
17. See 'To his Booke' (p. 98).
18. See 'The Olive Branch' (p. 73).
19. See 'An Ode to Master Endymion Porter, upon his Brothers death' (p. 72).
20. See 'The Heliotrope' (p. 428).

21. See above, Chapter V, Section 4a.
22. Rollin, op. cit., p. 209.
23. See Keats's sonnet "After dark vapors have oppress'd our plains", The Poetical Works of John Keats, ed. H. Buxton Forman (London, 1908, reprinted 1940), p. 292.
24. Rollin, op. cit., p. 45.
25. *ibid.*, p. 42.
26. See above, Chapter V, Section 2.
27. Edmund W. Gosse, "Robert Herrick", Seventeenth-Century Studies (London, 1883), pp. 128-129.
28. F.V. Moorman, Robert Herrick: A Biographical and Critical Study (London, 1910), p. 251.
29. See John Donne, "First Anniversary", Complete Poetry and Selected Prose, ed. John Hayward (London, 1955), p. 205.
30. Rollin, op. cit., p. 57.
31. See above, Chapter IV, Section 3.
32. See above, Chapter IV, Section 3: the "catalogue of delights".
33. See above, Chapter VI, Section 1.
34. See above, Chapter IV, Section 7, and George Hibbard's article, "The Country House Poem of the Seventeenth Century", Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes, XIX (1956), pp. 159-174.
35. Compare this experience of fantasy and "enchanting dreams" in a setting of springs, groves, and "well-weav'd Bows" with 'Il Penseroso', Lovelace's 'Aramantha', the woodland sequence in Upon Appleton House. See above, Chapter VI, Section 2, and Chapter VII, Section 3.
36. See above, Chapter IV, Section 7, and Chapter VI, Section 2.
37. Moorman, op. cit., p. 252.
38. Røstvig, op. cit., p. 113.

Chapter IX

George Daniel of Beswick

George Daniel was born at Beswick in the East Riding of Yorkshire in 1616, and died in 1657. Very little is known about his life beyond what can be inferred from his poetry. We know that his father, Sir Ingleby Daniel, matriculated at Caius College, Cambridge, and that his son, George, went to Magdalen College, Oxford; but we have no information about his own education. We know that his father actively supported the king in the Civil War, and that his younger brother, Thomas, was a coronet in the Royalist army; but although it is obvious from his writings that he was himself sympathetic to the king's cause, there is no evidence that he took an active part in the military struggle.¹ All the indications are that he passed most of his life in his native Yorkshire, only occasionally venturing as far afield as London,² and was content to put into practice the philosophy of country retirement which he shared with so many of his contemporaries. In the rural quiet of Beswick he cultivated the arts of poetry and painting, and took a keen interest in the new developments in scientific and philosophic thought, as well as in the usual pursuits of a country gentleman. He was well-read in classical literature, and his own poetry reveals - both by direct reference and by imitation - a wide knowledge of modern writers, ranging from Petrarch, Dante, du Bartas and du Bellay to Chaucer, Spenser, Sidney, Shakespeare, Donne and a surprisingly large number of contemporary poets, great and small.³ Both his editors⁴ surmise that he may have made the

personal acquaintance of some of the writers whose interests he shared, but there is no direct evidence. It seems highly probable that he knew Sir Thomas Browne,⁵ and Grosart declares, "Herbert . . . he must surely have met".⁶ But whatever his personal contacts may have been, his literary connections were manifold and some of them of great interest for this study.

He informs us more than once⁷ that much of his work, including his best pieces, was lost in a fire. A considerable body of verse survived in manuscript, however, to be printed for the first time in the nineteenth century. The bulk of this poetry consists of long works of a rather old-fashioned kind: Vervicensis is a complaint by the Earl of Warwick, modelled on the Mirror for Magistrates; The Genius of this Great and glorious Isle is a patriotic historical piece about the times of Elizabeth I and James I, and intended as a defence of the monarchy and of Charles I in particular; Trinarchodia is a long verse chronicle, similar to those of Samuel Daniel; and there are also a group of five Eclogues, five philosophical and satirical Idyllia, and a long paraphrase of Ecclesiasticus. It is in his shorter poems, however, mostly brought together in the manuscripts under the two titles Poems, Written upon Severall Occasions (1646) and Scattered Fancies (1645), that Daniel's gifts show to the best advantage; and it is in these - and especially in the fifty-nine odes that comprise the latter collection - that he makes his most significant contribution to the poetry of his age.

1. Conventional Descriptive Techniques.

Daniel's handling of that most artificial of descriptive devices - the periphrasis⁸ - reveals his understanding that, to be poetically effective, it must function as more than a mere form of words. The poem 'To my Muse' exploits the commonest of all periphrases:-

Awake, awake! See through thy Curtains Spred,
 Auroræ blushes, having left the Bed
 Of old Tithonius. Now She quits the place,
 With hairs Discheveld ore her ruddie face!
 Rise, and salute her, crie a haile vnto her,
 Prevent Appolloe, her more Active wooer:
 See, how he brisks himselfe, within yond Clovd,
 Readie to Enter. Now the Horses proud
 Breath fire, & trample with a furious heat,
 To hurrie in the Splendent Chariot. Yet
 Open thy Eyes (Dull Muse) and let in Day,
 Th'hast, as well as Hee, a word to Say.
 Now tis too late; th'hast lost (ah rue the fate)
 A Time, which even the God, would Emulate.⁹

Where many poets were content to use Apollo and his chariot simply as alternative words for the sun, Daniel, while maintaining the visual effects, draws out the fuller significance of the god as the patron of Poetry. The "fire" breathed by the horses and the "furious heat" are symbols of poetic inspiration, and the "Splendent Chariot" of its results. The imagery of dawn takes on a metaphoric value. The poet calls upon his creative faculties to awake, and seize the opportunity which he dimly sees through the "curtains" which shroud the dormant mind. He senses that his "Dull Muse" has "a word to Say", if it will only open itself to the dawning light of inspiration - "and let in Day". But the moment passes, and the opportunity is lost. Daniel has revitalized the hackneyed personifications by recognizing that they can be made to embody both the experience of dawn and the

experience of creative awakening. Just as the sleeping man must rouse himself to enjoy the passing moment of sunrise, so the inactive mind must respond to the fleeting impulses of the imagination.

Daniel puts another stock periphrasis to unexpectedly effective use in Ode LV of Scattered Fancies.¹⁰ The poem is a meditation on the wretchedness of sinful man, who contrives to abuse even the short and irretrievable span of time allotted to him in this world. It begins with an address to the "Sad Infants, of a groneing Time", the "Poor Minutes" which man will pervert from their innocence "to the lust of his intent". The personification of Time culminates in the periphrases of stanza 4:-

Ah man, unhappie man! the Infant Day
 Peepes, with a blubbered Eye,
 To looke upon
 The Nights dire Tragedie,
 Sad for our Sins; the night in Darke dismay
 Puts mourning on
 For our Day Crimes, more Sensible then wee.

The "blubbered Eye" is related to numerous images describing dawn or dusk in terms of eyes and tears,¹¹ but Daniel has secured a special appropriateness for it here by establishing the personification of Time early in the poem. The periphrastic conceit has two extensions of meaning. The dawn weeps for the sins which man has committed during the hours of darkness; and the night grieves for the sins committed during the daytime. But something more subtle than this simple emblematic interpretation is intended, since the poem is chiefly concerned with man's relationship with time. The imagery implies that every day of his life Time mourns for man, whose life

is, as it were, no more than a day. The "Infant Day" - the period of infancy - weeps for the sins with which man will disfigure the short daytime of life before being overtaken by the tragic night of death and judgment; and the night itself - image of death - goes into mourning for the "Crimes" which man has committed unthinkingly on his brief journey towards darkness.

These two examples indicate Daniel's readiness to discover fresh possibilities of metaphoric significance in the descriptive common-places of his time. His work also contains two instances of purely descriptive writing, one in the bravura tradition stemming from Virgil and Ovid and one related to the seventeenth-century topos of hyperbolical "metaphysical" descriptions.¹² The first of these, 'The Spring',¹³ begins in a manner reminiscent of one of the main sources of the tradition, Virgil's account of spring in Georgics II, lines 323-335:-

Now the Springe enters; now the Sun doth Cheare
The quick'ned Earth; and trees by Cold made bare
Now gin to bud; the Earth doth now begin
To flourish, in her Sweet and glorious Trimne;
The Silver Stream's, bound up by winters Cold,
Glide fairly, where they murmured of old.
The goodly Meadows, russet late, and Dead,
In a fresh Dresse, are now apparelled;
The mountaine tops are bared, and where the Snow
Late covered, the Spring begins to Shew.

After this generalized and slightly artificially phrased introduction, Daniel goes on to specify some of the particular sights and sounds of the season - the insects and birds and flowers. The items he chooses and his comments on them provide almost a compendium of

the seventeenth-century poet's stock of details and attitudes. There are "the Industrious Bee"; the Ant, "Embleme of Providence"; the flying "Maggot, in her paintings gay/(Signe of faire weather)" - the kind of comment typical of the Georgics - ; the Cuckoo, "Unnaturall foolish Bird", an evil omen to city-dwellers and ancient husbands; the "haples Philomel"; the "ambitious woodbine"; the "tardie Gilliflower"; the innocent lily; the marigold and violet, which are preferred to "the transplanted Tulip"; the joyful lark and the frisking lamb, both of which he exhorts his muse to emulate in the closing couplet. Between the cuckoo and the nightingale are the Redbreast and "gray Linnets", a little less common in the seventeenth-century poetic landscape, and some descriptive, rather than emblematic, lines about the Wren:-

The poore wren, flutters with an Eager wing
To gaine yond' highest Sprig, and there doth pay
A Ceremonious Himne, to welcome day.

But this is hardly less literary than the other items since, as Grosart wondered, "what fact in natural history as to the Wren thus offering a morning orison warrants the saying?"¹⁴ Grosart is less convincing when he refers the reader to this poem in search of "the insight of Wordsworth's later-day in our Poet's descriptions of Nature".¹⁵

The second of Daniel's descriptive poems belongs to the tradition which produced Cartwright's and Shipman's accounts of great frosts, and, more nearly related, Joseph Beaumont's 'The Winter-Spring' and Thomas Washbourne's 'Upon a great showre of snow that fel on May day, 1634'.¹⁶ Daniel's 'A Strange Maye'¹⁷ is less conceited

than Cartwright's and Shipman's pieces, and much more closely tied to the real scene than Beaumont's periphrastic introduction and emblematic development. The natural occurrence is extra-ordinary enough in itself for him not to need the added extravagance of rhetorical hyperbole:-

all the Meads were sett
With bright Enamel; and the feilds were fitt
All most for the keene Sickle, which might seeme
Justly a wonder; if wee doe esteeme
Oure colder Latitude; for who shall say
(Without reproofe) the Harvest is in Maye?
Now Maye it was; what vast Hyperbole
Will serve but to speake truth? the blooming Tree
Crack't with its weight of Fruite; and wee almost
Might, by the Season, August have suppos'd:
All Eares were fill'd, and everie tongue could prate
Of Prodigie; and guesse, I know not what.

By avoiding the overblown metaphysical style of Cartwright and concentrating on the facts Daniel is able to convey more of the genuine amazement felt by the local community. Such an early harvest might, indeed, "seeme/Justly a wonder". The temperance of the expression achieves a much greater sense of astonishment than a straining after witty effects. The single piece of wit - the pun in the phrase "All Eares were fill'd" - reinforces that feeling of a communal reaction to the event which is the poem's most interesting achievement, and at the same time suggests the poet's slightly amused enjoyment of the rustic philosophers who "prate/Of Prodigie".

But there is more to come. One wonder is followed by another:-

Thus, stood the Earth; to Miracle almost;
When the more Miracle, a biteing frost
With a bleake northerne wind, orerun the feild
And nipt the Swelling Graine, the fruits it kill'd;

The painted Meadows, chilled in their pride,
Grow wan; and flowers run backe agen, to hide
Themselves, in warmer Crannies of the Earth.

The last two lines especially suggest a genuine sympathy for the plants as living creatures which is reminiscent of some of Vaughan's references to flowers. The poem ends with the hope that a sunny June will repair the damage inflicted by this strange "Storme in May".

2. The Country Life.

George Daniel was one of the many poets of his age to whom a retired country life was attractive as a religious, philosophic, and poetic ideal.¹⁸ His poems contain most of the attitudes associated with the beatus ille tradition. He rejects the turmoil of the city in conventional terms in 'A Pastorall Ode' - "Come leave the Cities Strife/And chuse a Countrie Life" - and in 'Freedome' - "I blesse my starrs, I am unfitt for noise;/And busines: all most shuns me, to my Choice".¹⁹ He delights in the country pursuits of fishing, hunting, shooting, and hawking, and in the Horatian and Jonsonian pleasures of conversation and good wine.²⁰ He extols the virtues of patience and humility, and the quiet meditative frame of mind which such a life encourages. He puts the philosophic case for retirement simply in 'Freedome':-

With these innocuous pleasures I can rest
In my selfe quiet; (and display the brest
Of all my Crime, unto my selfe) wee live
Guiltye, I hope of lesser Sins.²¹

And in Ode LVII of Scattered Fancies he half glances at the favourite image of Nature's Book, in a phrase reminiscent of Fane's 'To Retiredness':-

But pleased in my retire, my Selfe survey;
 And Studie my owne Heart:
 Turne over a new leafe, for everie Day:
 And many things impart,
 Which Common sence and Eyes
 Oft see not.

(p. 164)

What is especially endearing about Daniel's Horatian philosophy is his love for his own native district. In 'An Ecloge spoken by Amintas and Strephon',²² Strephon rejects his friend's invitation to come "and wanton on the Thame":-

My deare Amintas, doe not think the bright
 Zenith of London carries onely Light.
 Let Yorkshire have some ray from the great flame,
 Which warmes you there.

Amintas presses the case against the northern climate, but Strephon is adamant:-

Yet, if I did
 Waver in Choice, and tooke the whole Survey
 Of North and South, noe Countrie everie way
 More pleases me; and I am glad you fall
 To allow the Countrie pleasant is at all.
 Amintas, 'Tis; (if humane nature can
 Arrive at what may make a happie man)
 The Summe of All; to enjoy, without feare,
 What heaven layes out to blesse vs every yeare;
 In such abundance, such varietie,
 That were wee Blind to it, the Motts* would see
 To praise the giver; were wee mute, the Stones
 Would sing to him; and All the Hills at once
 Leape like yonge Kidds. What need wee witt or Skill,
 When these informe our brains, and leade our Quill,
 Beyond all Conversation? Men and Bookes
But trouble Him who at the Creature lookes.
 *midgees? (Grosart's note) more probably = motes

The latter part of this passage introduces another characteristic theme of the retirement poets: the revelation of God in his Creation, in its abundance and variety, and in the witness of the creatures.

As a poet, he claims, the sights and sounds of Nature are sufficient inspiration for his "Quill". He more than once returns to this idea. Ode XII denies any competition with the famous poets who sing "in bright Southerne Glades", and continues:-

Let me, unto the fameles Deviaes Shore,
 Low Accents frame,
 Unenvied in my Fate, or in my Fame;
 And raise my Store
 From noe mans Harvest, but a Stocke produce
 From native bounties, to enrich my Muse;
 And run, with changing Chords, as Fancie guides
 To everie new
 Object of Chance; which wee will more pursue,
 The more it slides,
 And gather a fresh Stocke, from all wee see,
 Our numbers Charged, in varietie.

(p. 91)

This account of Daniel's poetic method is highly interesting for the light it throws on his conception of the relationship between the external world and the poet's art. He gleans his material not from other men's works but from his own natural surroundings, and his imagination is led forward by "everie new/Object of Chance" which his commerce with the variety of the Creation throws in its path. The process is very similar to that described in Saint-Amant's 'La Solitude', in Katherine Philips's translation:-

Sometimes pensive, sometimes gay,
Just as that fury does control,
And as the object I survey,
The notions grow up in my soul. 23

Daniel's fancy is guided into more meditative and philosophic courses than the French libertin's more romantic sensibility, but the remarkable closeness of the two philosophies of poetry - Daniel's "with

changing Chords" presumably means something similar to Saint-Amant's "Sometimes pensive, sometimes gay" - is perhaps indicative of the English poet's responsiveness to the changing emphases of the age.²⁴ Certainly some of the more original developments in his religious verse seem to be the result of pursuing this theory of poetic inspiration. He was a poet for whom, like Vaughan, the country life provided much more than an escape from the world of affairs and a tranquillity conducive to virtuous meditation. As he says in Ode XI:-

when the wing
Of Fancie, flies to sport,
Heaven, Ayre, Earth, Water, all their beauties bring.
(p. 90)

3. Nature Rich and Curious.

In 'The Spring' Daniel brings his list of seasonal items to a climax with the declaration: "Nature is Rich, and Curious in her store". Some of his most successful and characteristic poems explore the implications of these two aspects of the universe. "Wonder" is a word which crops up several times in his work, and it suggests his characteristic attitude to God's Creation. 'The Userper' begins:-

tr. I saw the World; and wondred at the Sight;
(For I was raised above the common Light
Into that Region, where wee eas'lye see
All formes at once, mixed or diverslie)
Hence I look'd downe; and saw the Creatures, All
Fixt in their Causes; and made Severall
To their distinct, and single Motion,
Which wee distinguish strangely, to our owne
Capacities; and Rationall prefer
Proper, alone to Man; the Beasts (more nere
Then Plants, or Trees,) wee call but Sensitive;
And those, by vegetation, meerly live.²⁵

Stroup's note on the first four lines of this passage reads: "Cf. Henry Vaughan's 'The World': 'I saw eternity the other night'." He does not draw any conclusions from this similarity - not even the thought-provoking one that Daniel's poem, which is included in the MS collection dated 1646, ante-dates the printing of 'The World' in the 1650 edition of Silex Scintillans (and presumably its composition) by a number of years. Daniel, as we shall see, anticipates Vaughan in significant ways more than once. 'The Userper' has connections with other poems of the period, and indeed it seems to belong to a definite tradition. The strategy of the poem is the same as Vaughan's: the poet moves from the "wonderful" vision of the entire scheme of Creation to a lament for man's sinful abuse of his position as "Lord of all the world" by the misuse of Reason, the very quality which should raise him above the other creatures. So Vaughan enumerates the follies of the Lover, the Statesman, and the Miser, all of whom "prefer dark night/Before true light". Vaughan's editor refers us to a passage in the *Hermetica*, and adds that "Vaughan may have been partly indebted also to Casimir's adaptation of the same Hermetic passage (Casimir, Odes, ii. 5)".²⁶ Casimir's poem, in Hill's translation of 1646, begins:-

Lift me up quickly on your wings,
Ye Clouds, and Winds; I leave all earthly things;
How Devious Hills give way to mee!
And the vast ayre brings under, as I fly,
Kingdomes and populous states!²⁷

Like 'The World', the rest of the ode concentrates mainly on the various ills of the human realm of Creation. Another poem which

contains the same ingredients is a meditation based on Psalm XIX in William Habington's Castara (1640). It begins with a vision of the heavens, and the poet's flight beyond the sphere of common experience:-

When I survey the bright
 Coelestiall spheare:
 So rich with jewels hung, that night
 Doth like an Aethiop bride appeare.
 My soule her wings doth spread
 And heaven-ward flies,
 Th'Almighty's Mysteries to read
 In the large volumes of the skies.²⁸

The poem goes on to consider the futility of conquerors and earthly empires when seen against the great and abiding glories of the universe. It concludes, in the same vein as Daniel and Vaughan, with a comment on man's stupidity and crime in turning from the "true light", and failing to use his gift of Reason to read the lessons inherent in the Creation:-

Thus those Coelestiall fires,
 Though seeming mute
 The fallacie of our desires
 And all the pride of life confute.

For they have watcht since first
 The World had birth:
 And found sinne in itselfe accurst,
 And nothing permanent on earth.

Daniel's vision is obviously based on the Great Chain of Being, which he could have derived from many sources, but which is interestingly a favourite theme of Sir Thomas Browne whose ideas he reflects in a number of other poems. Another contemporary poet who expresses his admiration of the great structure of God's work was Ralph Knevet, whose 'Infinitenes' also evokes the Chain of Being:-

Nor doth thy wisdom lesse mee take,
 When I behold the order rare,
 Of things, which thine owne hand did make:
 Even from the gloworme, to the starre,
 From th'Angell bright, to the darke clod,
 Thy wisdom doth extend (oh God).²⁹

Daniel's most sustained treatment of the theme of "Nature . . . Rich, and Curious" is found in the remarkable sequence of odes in Scattered Fancies running from number XII to number XV.³⁰ Ode XII, the earlier stanzas of which were discussed in the previous section, gets into its stride in stanza 5:-

There will I sing vast Nature, in her Store;
 And sing the Power
 Which gives to Nature all her wealth; the bower
 Of All (and more)
 Perfection; where all fullnes doth remaine,
 Parent to Nature, who doth All sustaine.

Like many before him - among them Bacon and Browne - Daniel is careful to assert the pre-eminence of God, the ultimate source of being, over "vast Nature". He also takes pains to emphasise that God does not only create, He also actively maintains his Creation - He "doth All sustaine". This was a point which Sir Isaac Newton was to insist upon later in the century.³¹ Daniel, in expressing his conception of the universe, reveals a clear understanding of the philosophical issues which were exercising contemporary scientists and theologians. Many details of his argument indicate that he stands close to Sir Thomas Browne (whose work he paid tribute to in verse, and whom he may well have known personally³²), both in belief and in attitude. In the next stanza, for example, he echoes Browne's admiration for

the smaller and more humble creatures of Nature:-

And not her lest production but doth stand
A powerfull wittnes of his mightie Hand.

He looks upon the physical universe with delight and amazement:-

Wee doe not tread,
But a fresh wonder rises, to display
Its beauties, Sparkes from the Eternall Ray.

By day and night he meets "Ten miriads of wonder" - from monarch to peasant, ant to lion, "Royall Eagle" to "Billie sparrowes", "mightie Cedar" to lowly shrubs, rose and lily to despised nettle - he finds evidence of God's creating and sustaining activity.

These pairings derive from the hierarchic conception of the universe, according to which the creatures on each plane of existence - the human, the animal, the vegetable - were ranked in order of nobility. Ode XIII turns its attention to the workings of time, and marvels at the unexpected effects of Nature's power which "doth in Things appeare":-

Some things live but a Day, and some a yeare;
Some, many years fullfill;
Some, which in Nature were thought strong enough,
Doe soone Decaye;
And the weake Spray,
Which yeilds to everie wind, is sometimes tough.

More pairs of extreme examples follow, this time based on life-expectancy: the "long-lived Raven" sometimes survives no longer than a sparrow; "The Stagge, and Sheepe may be co-terminate"; the elephant and the mouse "may run/An Equall race"; and the heliotrope "may live with the last Sun". Then, with a fine poetic surprize which seems to be the result of letting his Fancy guide "To everie new/Object of

Chance", the poem swings onto another tack at the thought of the heliotrope:-

That wonder: is it Natures? that a Flower
 Observing all his path,
 Should change the Station, with Him everie Howre,
 And feele a kind of Death,
 When his Flame quencht, to westerne waves, doth fall.

This most conventional of emblematic images is suddenly infused with new vigour, as Daniel sees it with fresh eyes as a real flower and one of Nature's wonders, rather than as an item in the emblemist's repertoire. In the next stanza, the poem changes direction unexpectedly again:-

Or, be it Natures worke; who gave her Power?
 The word is the mistake;
 You call it Nature; but I call it more;
 That which did Nature make.

This leads Daniel into a further exploration of the theme touched on briefly in the preceding ode, and thence into an exaltation of Nature above Art, and an attack on man's overweening and futile attempt to understand the "large Misterie" of Nature's ultimate secrets:-

When man shall undertake
 To Circle mightie Nature, in the Sphere
 Which groveling Fancies make.

"Mightie Nature" foresaw that man would make this proud attempt, and therefore "sett before the Face of Truth, a wall,/Beyond Discoverie".

Like Browne, Daniel seems to rejoice in an O altitudo!

Ode XIV begins with a statement on the mutability of all created things - "Nothing but changeth Still" - and proceeds to examine at length the proposition that man's limited faculties and perspective

often lead him to faulty judgments about his fellow creatures:-

And what wee 'count in Nature monstrous
Is nothing lesse;
It is, to us;
But is a true production, to expresse
The Maker infinite, to noe rules Tyed;
And tis his Power, to be Diversified.

Once again Daniel scorns "the pretence/Of humane Reason", which presumes to set itself up as the arbiter of perfection and beauty:-

Perhaps the crooked Hawthorne (to the Eye
Of Nature) is as right as Cedars high.

The rest of the ode pursues this idea, which is also central to Sir Thomas Browne's conception of the order of things. Browne held that "there is a general beauty in the works of God", and could not understand "by what Logick we call a Toad, a Bear, or an Elephant ugly", since after the act of creation God "saw that all that He had made was good".³³ Daniel offers many more examples of natural objects which are usually prized or despised - the rose and the henbane, the "fragrant violet" and "loathsome weeds", tulip and daisy, "famed Heliotrope" and "vulgar Marigold", apple and crab, grape and sloe, pheasant and hen, and so on - and argues that "the supreme Rector in Each place/Doth the whole Creature, with his bountie fill". The poem ends with the kind of twist which is characteristic of this poet: having produced as his final example the equal merit of "great Rivers" and "the least Spring", he suddenly sets us down firmly on the banks of his own Yorkshire stream:-

Not only Thames,
But where I sing

The famelous Devia, equall bountie claimes:
There will I shade my browes, and bring a Store
Of better verse, to Sing his wonders ore.

Ode XV completes the sequence by rising beyond the contemplation of earthly things, and appealing to "the great/Rector of nature" who disperses his gifts throughout the universe "in everie kind", so that "all his bounties meet/To make a Harmonie compleat". Daniel rejoices that He is a God:-

Whose Misterie, Stupendious height
Includes; the object of our Faith alone;
For he were none,
If Reason could unfold him, to our Sight;
And to fraile Sence, display that Light.

Browne, too, delighted to lose himself "in a mystery", and test his faith by contemplating those things which were beyond the scope of reason, "for to credit ordinary and visible objects is not faith, but perswasion".³⁴ This remarkable sequence of poems, which might be regarded as Daniel's Religio Medici, presents a comprehensive and consistent vision of the material universe, and the threefold relationship between the Creator, the Creation, and the crucial link in the Great Chain - Mankind. Its poetic success derives largely from Daniel's stated method of following "everie new/Object of Chance", which gives the odes an air of spontaneity as one thought or image seems to prompt the next. He takes us on a voyage of exploration, sharing with us his own pleasure as, at each step, "a fresh wonder rises".

We have already seen in 'The Userper' a similarity to Vaughan. In Ode LIV there is another intriguing resemblance to the later poet.

Daniel, taking the image of the magnetic compass as his starting point, meditates on the "Strange Simpathie" which seems to bind the creatures together:-

Rather see everie Creature, pointing forth
Its proper object, as this meets the North.
(p. 157)

The second stanza elaborates this idea, and the third applies it to man:-

II

Tis seene by everie Eye, in Common things;
How apt and Eagerlie
They joyne themselves. Everie occasion brings
Prooffe, to this Propertie.
Tis not alone the Adamant, can boast
This strange Affinitie;
Not Flowers, nor Trees, nor Birds, nor Beasts are lost,
But Each, respectivelie,
Have hidden Flames: and move
By a strange innate Cause,
To its chiefe End; insensible, what drawes
See neare a tye of Love,
But loose all Choice; and their Cheife Sence devour
In the strange force of this magneticke Power.

III

These secret workings, in all Bodies are;
And All, at once, are mett
In man; whose motion, more irregular
To all the points, doth flitt:
(pp. 157-8)

Several of Vaughan's poems are based on a similar conception of the "secret workings" and "strange Affinitie" which link different objects into a universal harmony. In 'Cock-crowing', he suggests that there is a "Sunnie seed" implanted in these birds, so that "Their magnetisme works all night" and "Their eyes watch for the morning hue". Another poem begins with words quite close to Daniel's

phrasing at the start of the third stanza: "Sure, there's a tye of Bodyes!" and later declares:-

Absents within the Line Conspire, and Sense
 Things distant doth unite,
 Herbs sleep unto the East, and some fowles thence
 Watch the Returns of light.³⁵

As Daniel's compass needle points to the north, and every creature to "its proper object", so Vaughan's herbs and birds turn towards the east; as some obscure "Sense/Things distant doth unite" in Vaughan's poem, so all creatures, according to Daniel, "their Cheife Sence devour/In the strange force of this magneticke Power". Yet another of Vaughan's poems, based on Romans, Chapter 8, verse 19, begins:-

And do they so? have they a Sense
 Of ought but Influence?

and in the third stanza remarks:-

Thy other Creatures in this Scene
 Thee only aym, and mean;
 Some rise to seek thee, and with heads
 Erect peep from their beds.³⁶

Daniel's ode concludes:-

But Hee must bend, to that darke Simpathie,
 Which yet unseen, doth shine
 Upon his Heart; and passionat'lie move
 Him to behold, or Seeke, desire, or Love.

Daniel's poem seems to be concerned with the attraction which unites human lovers, whereas Vaughan is dealing with the connection between the creatures and their Maker, but the fundamental idea and some of the phrasing used by the two poets is tantalisingly similar. There is no evidence that Vaughan could ever have seen Daniel's work, though one might conjecture that he could have made the acquaintance

of that other country doctor, Sir Thomas Browne, who might have had access to manuscripts of his admirer's poems.

This section can fittingly close with a poem which expresses Daniel's most abiding attitude when faced with the variety of Nature - Ode XXVII:-

Looke above, and see thy wonder;
 Downward looke, and see it under;
 Upon thy Right hand, see it shine;
 And meet thy Left, in the same Line;
 Survey the Earth; and sound the deepe;
 From those that flye, to those that Creepe.
 See everie Creature: and behold
 From the base Mirtle, to the old
 Majesticke oke; viewe everie plant,
 Herbe, root, or flower; none wonder want;
 Consider Springs; and as you passe,
 Meet wonder, in the smallest grasse;
 Let even Dust, and Atomes rise
 To strike new wonder, in thy Eyes;
 Observe the rapid orbes; and see
 A Cloud, beyond Discoverie.
 See all about thee; and display
 Thy understanding, to the ray
 Of this combined Flame; this tongue
 Of universall praise, has sung
 To a Deafe Eare. All objects stand
 To teach, but wee not understand.
 Are these obscure? or too remote?
 Beyond thy notion, or thy note?
 Looke at thy selfe; and wonder more:
 Nature contracted, in her Store.

(pp. 132-3)

Other poets of the period expressed their admiration for the universal scheme of things.³⁷ But their statement of this admiration was almost always expressed in terms of the Creator's power and wisdom and goodness. Daniel, as we have seen already, shared this sense of God's pervading influence: all creatures sing a "universall praise". But in this ode his genuine delight in nature's off-spring

simply as things - from "the old/Majesticke oke" to "the smallest grasse", from the atoms of dust to the "rapid orbes" - is the burden of his song. When he looks around him at the countryside he loves, so he says in Ode XI, "Heaven, Ayre, Earth, water, all their beauties bring".

4. Occasional Meditations.

Two scholars have noted, within the sphere of their own particular interests, a significant change of emphasis in the poetic outlook of the decades leading up to the Commonwealth. Rosemary Freeman, commenting on the development of the emblem in the hands of Quarles and his followers, writes:-

There is, in the first place, a change in theme, a shift in the later emblems from what is impersonal, to more individual and subjective types of material.³⁸

And Louis L. Martz considers that the publication of Milton's 1645 volume and the 1650 edition of Vaughan's Silex Scintillans "marks the emergence of the layman as a central force in religious poetry of the period".³⁹ Vaughan's work in particular "stands as a sign of a profound mutation in human affairs". Comparing Vaughan's material with that of Herbert, he finds that the earlier poet's work, though often intimate in tone, is basically eucharistic, while the later poet - at least in his most characteristic pieces - seeks out "individual ways of communion with God".⁴⁰ In some of the most celebrated poems in Silex Scintillans and in several of Joseph Beaumont's best compositions, the two streams of emblem and more

personal devotional lyric flow together.⁴¹ Some years before either of these poets, in a handful of the odes collected in 1645 as Scattered Fancies, George Daniel was developing a kind of poem along similar lines.

The first example of what might be called Daniel's Occasional Meditations is Ode XVI.⁴² It begins with three stanzas describing the dawn: in stanza 1, the clear skies and fragrant breezes, and "Aurora faire", who "Spreads all the Treasure of her haire" to "glad the Creatures, in a well-come day"; in stanza 2, the lark - the "Dayes best Chæritier" - and the "Royall Eagle"; and in stanza 3, the crowing of the "manly Cocke", and the early activities of "thrifftie villagers", "frugall wives", and Coridon the shepherd, whose sheep "spread ore the Hills". Daniel then places himself in relation to this scene:-

Only I slug it: with a careles Head;
And my free Genius steepe,
In the wide Gulph, of Sleep;
And loose my Spirrits in a tempting Bed;
. I have noe will to rise.

In stanza 5 he determines to "Shake/Those fetters into Ayre", and the poem ends:-

Forsake me, you Dull ministers of Sleepe,
And let me Raise my Quill,
To Court th'Olimpicke Hill
With Earlie praises; and Survey the Heape
Of natures bounties; then
If I (soe bold) may Pen
Something to praise Him, whom I most admire,
My God, my Glorie, I have my Desire.

The strategy of this poem clearly owes something to the emblem; the account of the activities of the birds and country folk prompts the

poet to examine his own sloth, and to recognize that he too should add his "Earlie praises" to the joyful song of lark and cock. But whereas most emblems draw a general truth from the natural phenomenon they contemplate,⁴³ Daniel takes the morning's bustle as a personal rebuke. The relationship between himself and the external world which schools him in correct behaviour has the intimacy of the devotional tradition stemming from George Herbert. Perhaps the closest parallel in previous verse is Herbert's 'Life', where the dying "posie" is interpreted as "Times gentle admonition", teaching the poet how to live and die.⁴⁴ Closer in substance, though not in the formal structure of the poem, is the stanza from Herbert's 'Employment (I)':-

All things are busie; onely I
Neither bring hony with the bees,
Nor flowres to make that, nor the husbandrie
To water these.⁴⁵

The poem ends with the same plea as Daniel's:

Lord place me in thy consort; give one strain
To my poore reed.

The devout man's duty to rise early and praise his Maker is a familiar theme of the new school of religious poets who derived their inspiration from Herbert. One of the first commands in Vaughan's 'Rules and Lessons' is:-

Yet, never sleep the Sun up; Prayer shou'd
Dawn with the day; There are set, awful hours
'Twixt heaven, and us.⁴⁶

The same poet's 'Christ's Nativity' begins with the exhortation:-

Awake, glad heart! get up, and sing,
It is the Birth-day of thy King.⁴⁷

It continues with references to the rising sun and the "Perfumes" which "spice the day", just as Daniel's ode opens with the clear sky, "Active Phoebus", and "Balme and Spice" in the "purged Ayre"; and then describes the sounds of nature, which remind the poet of man's special obligations:-

Awak, awak! heark, how th'wood rings,
Winds whisper, and the busie springs
 A Consort make;
 Awake, awake!
 Man is their high-priest, and should rise
 To offer up the sacrifice.

In a later ode, number XXX in the sequence, Daniel makes explicit the rebuke which is implicit in Ode XVI, and reinforces his claim to be among the first of the lay devotional poets to exploit this theme which derives from Herbert. It begins with the lark, and the poet's shamed reaction:-

The Sprightlie Larke, upon yond Eastern Hill,
His early vowes
Has payed; and summons up my Lazy Quill
Againe to rouse,
And in Cleare notes, like her owne Harmonie,
Salute the Day;
But I, Dull Sinner, Stay,
And her third Himne performed. How dull am I?
(p. 123)

In the second stanza, Daniel laments his slothful silence, "when/All
Creatures bring/Somewhat, for offering"; and in the third, declares:
"Shame were it, to prefer a Pillow, soft/With Ease and Sin". He then
determines to bring "a small Tribute" along with the "other Creatures":-

In a Consort of Praise, all Creatures joyne;
The Squallid owle
Twitters a midnight note; though not soe fine,
Yet with a Soule

As gratefull, as the Nightingales cleare Song;
 The universe
 Deth the great Himne rehearse.
 I only bear my part, the rest among.
 (p. 124)

The ode concludes with regret that his celebration of Him, "who to this Day/Hath many waies/Preserved me", should be so "Muddled, and lame": "I've done soe much, soe ill".

The "Consort of Praise" in the stanza quoted in full above is the "consort" of the last lines of Herbert's 'Employment (1)', the "consort" of Vaughan's 'Christ's Nativity', and "The great Chime/And Symphony of nature" of the Silurist's most famous dawn poem, 'The Morning-watch'. Another later poet who contributes to the mainstream of this line of devotional verse, Joseph Beaumont, is awakened by "A sudden Consort" of birdsong, which tells him that the "honest Birds" have long been "at their Mattens on a Neighbour Tree". This poem is entitled 'The Sluggard'; another, called emblematically 'The Gentle Check', tells how the poet is rebuked by a "dainty-tongued Bird", whose morning devotions "chode/Me into thoughts of God,/To whome most due my earlyer Accents were".⁴⁸ Yet another poet, Rowland Watkyns, remarks that the "thankful Anthem" of the lark causes him to tax himself "of dull unthankfulness".⁴⁹ Of this group of poets - Daniel, Vaughan, Beaumont, Watkyns - Daniel was the earliest to develop the devotional theme of man's duty of morning praise in a rhetorical form reminiscent of the emblem. Where the emblem-poet proper derives lessons from the contemplation of some particular object from nature, this line of lay devotional poets create an intimate sense of their

involvement with the rest of God's creatures, by deriving lessons from a close personal experience. Their meditations are occasional, rather than eucharistic. It is perhaps significant that Herbert's only morning-poem, 'The Dawning', is concerned with the dawn only as an image of the return of Christ.⁵⁰

One other piece by Daniel, Ode XXIII, belongs to this group of occasional religious poems. This time the experience which sets the meditation in motion is that of hearing a robin sing in winter:-

Poore bird, I doe not envie thee;
 Pleas'd, in the gentle Melodie
 Of thy owne Song.
 Let crabbed winter Silence all
 The winged Quire; he never shall
 Chaine up thy Tongue.
 Poore Innocent,
 When I would please my selfe, I looke on thee;
 And guess some sparkes, of that Felicitie,
 That Selfe Content.
 (p. 113)

Although the "bleake Face" of winter has stripped the earth of its beauty, the robin remains, "Bidding defiance to the bitter Ayre". The poet is awed and shamed by the "odes of Praise" which the "prettye Creature" can still sing during this dismal season - one is reminded of Thomas Hardy's similar experience in 'The Darkling Thrush' - and derives a personal lesson from the encounter:-

Poore pious Elfe!
 I am instructed, by thy harmonie,
 To sing away, the Times uncertaintie,
 Safe in my Selfe.
 (p. 114)

At this point a number of genres come together: the emblem, whereby the poet is taught wisdom by a creature; the devotional lyric, which

concerns itself with the quality of personal life; and the retirement poem, which deals with the individual's inner contentment and the escape from "the Times uncertaintie". If this last phrase is a reference to the troubles of the Civil War, then the final stanza may be read as an indictment of those whose frivolous verses are unsuited to a period of desolation:-

Peere Redbreast, caroll out thy Laye
 And teach us mortalls what to saye.
 Here cease, the Quire
 Of ayerie Choristers; noe more
 Mingle your notes; but catch a Store
 From her Sweet Lire;
 You are but weake,
 Meere summer Chanters; you have neither wing
 Nor voice, in winter. Prettie Redbreast, Sing
 What I would speake.

In the course of the meditation prompted by the bird's defiant song, the robin becomes an embodiment of Daniel's Horatian philosophy. It is a symbol of the quiet constancy and courage needed by those who must live through the wintry season of national disaster.

This fine poem is Daniel's most significant development of the emblematic method. Unlike the heliotrope or the lark, the robin does not bring with it an established body of meaning. The poet has to make his own connections between the natural phenomenon and his personal situation, and he succeeds in achieving a symbolic status for the creature without ever sacrificing its identity as one of nature's "wonders". He avoids the usual weakness of emblematic poems: that of opening a gap between the description and the application. In doing this, he looks forward to Vaughan's successes in 'The Water-fall',

'The Shewre', and, most closely related, 'The Bird'.

5. The Muses Bower and the Vale of Care.

Ode XIX might be read as an allegorical treatment of the poet's ability to "sing away, the Times uncertaintie,/Safe in my Selfe" - taking "Time" in its wider sense as the lord of mutability. It seems to be related to a peculiar development of the Eternal Spring topos, in which a flourishing garden or landscape beyond the reach of decay is opposed to the material world. Herbert's 'The Flower' evokes this image of the unfading garden in the closing stanza:-

These are thy wonders, Lord of love,
To make us see we are but flowers that glide:
Which when we once can finde and prove,
Thou hast a garden for us, where to bide.⁵¹

Vaughan, in 'Mount of Olives',⁵² on first seeing the "true beauty" and the joys of God, recognized that "The world did only paint and lie", and describes the experience as similar to that of an imaginary glimpse of a spring landscape:-

So have I known some beauteous Paisage rise
In suddain flowres and arbours to my Eyes,
And in the depth and dead of winter bring
To my Cold thoughts a lively sense of spring.

But the most extended example is 'The Garden' by James Shirley, which was discussed in an earlier chapter.⁵³ Shirley's garden is a garden of the mind, a kind of hortus conclusus, which seems to be partly a symbol of his own immortality as a poet. Daniel's garden is in like manner exempt from the process of mutability:-

I doe not feele the Storme,
Which vexes you, in the too soone Decay

Of your fair gardens verdure. Where noe Spray
 Lookes green, noe Flower
 But run into his root;
 Your fruit trees lower;
 You cannot set your foot
 In all your Garden on a liveing worme.
 (p. 108)

The sense of immediacy here - of the desolation of a mere earthly garden in winter - owes a great deal to the last two lines, where the fine and original image draws together the dead surroundings and the frustration of the man who puts his trust in the material world which is a prey to transience.

In stanza 2 the glories of the gardener's toil - the "high-pris'd Tulip", the gilly-flowers, the rose, the violet, and the lily - have all faded and died. Daniel's garden still flourishes, however:-

When I, beyond the Rage
 Of Time, or winters malice, now can Show
 A liveing Paradise; and lead you, through
 Greene Alleys, set
 With ever verdant flowers.

He has a rose which "will keepe/Its Scent, and beautie, to another Spring", and can bring, in this dead season which has despoiled the earth of its flowers, "A goodly Tulip, Stript/In Gold and Purple". It is only in the final stanza, in typical Daniel fashion, that it becomes clear what the significance of the poet's garden is:-

How doe they drop away?
 Your flowers, and Joyes together? Goe with me
 Into Apolloes Garden; you shall see,
 To mocke at yours
 And frustrate all your Thought,
 A bed of Flowers,
 Into quaint mazes wrought;
 The Muses bower, under the liveing Bay.
 (p. 109)

The poet, "safe in himself", is beyond the "Storme" of winter, and "the Rage/Of Time". He is as secure in his "Muses bower" as Herbert in the "garden" beyond death, Vaughan in the "beauteous Paisage" of the soul's experience of God, and Shirley in his "Summer room" composed of "Bayes and Ewe" (symbols of immortal verse and death). Each of these poets establishes a contrast between the time-bound gardens of earth and the more enduring and valuable realm of their allegorical gardens. But only Daniel evinces in any detail the "too soone Decay" of the world in which our everyday lives are passed.

Ode XLIII is also allegorical in technique, but its subject this time is the poet's state of mind. In a way similar to Cowley's 'The Complaint', which describes the melancholy poet lying beneath a yew tree "In a deep Vision's intellectual scene",⁵⁴ Daniel creates a landscape peopled by the appropriate emblematic creatures. Stanza 2 gives a taste of the whole poem, and contains one particularly interesting comment on a natural detail:-

Goe, to the horrid vale of Care;
 And tread the maze, of your owne Feare.
 There grow noe Bayes, nor mirtles there,
 But the Sad dismall Yeiugh:
 Day birds are banished this grove.
 The monstrous Batt, alone doth rove;
 And the dire Screich-owle, percht above
 Your over-clouded Brow
 Shall make you Sad,
 Beyond the Cause of Sorrow, which you had.
 (p. 141)

Not only does the natural setting correspond to the poet's misery: it also increases the misery. The "dire Screich-owle" will depress the spirits "Beyond the Cause of Sorrow" which prompted the dismal

imaginings. The poet is suggesting here that an object in the external world which is usually associated with melancholy and despair can actively generate this state of mind. Man's mood can be influenced by his surroundings, as well as his mood being reflected in the surroundings, which is the more common poetic practice during this period. The very fact that Daniel should make this kind of remark at all is an indication of his responsiveness to natural phenomena - something which we have seen in a devotional context in the Occasional Meditations - and of his thoughtful interest in the relationship between the external world and the mind of man.

One other poem employs a technique allied to that of allegory, and explores a state of depression similar to that of the previous ode, but this time in a devotional context. Ode X begins with an apparently realistic and objective description of a storm:-

The Day was Darke; and Heaven, his bright face Shrouds,
 In Sable Clouds;
 The gaudie Sun, in his Meridian Light,
 Was Darke, as Night;
 And horrid Stormes, came rolling on the Skye;
 The Thunder Strucke, the Lightning feirce did flye;
 The Ayre incensed, all her Streames let fall;
 The Cataracts of Heaven, their Doores set ope,
 Whose gushing Torrents call
 Fresh Floods, to crosse the avaritious Hope
 Of Men; to looke it should be faire at all.
 (p. 87)

Thus far there is no indication of the direction the poem might take: it appears to be a pure description of a stormy day. In the second stanza, Daniel relates the effect of the tempest on his own spirits:-

My Sober Muse can say how it did wound
 My Sinnew-bound
 Unusefull Members; how my Sence was dull
 And my Soule full
 Of horror and amazement; . . .

There is still no hint that the storm is anything but a real storm which oppresses the poet's spirits, like the owl in Ode XLIII. But in the third stanza symbolic undertones can be discerned. A "glance of heavens Immortall ray" pierces the gloom and banishes fear, strengthens frailty, and "my doubts made clear":-

That recollecting all my Thoughts, made new,
And weighing the late cause, of this Affright,
Untroubled Heavens I veiw,
The Sun unclouded, and the Welkin bright;
Onlie, the Storme was in my bosome true.
(pp. 87-88)

It is not until the last line that the metaphoric status of the storm is assured, and we can interpret the "Heaven" and the "Sable Clouds" of the opening lines in their wider symbolic sense. This unexpected turn, whereby the storm which seemed so objectively real is suddenly transformed into an exclusively subjective experience, is typical of Daniel's poetic methods. It is like Ode XIX, which delays identifying the significance of the poet's garden until the final stanza. The poem ends with a couplet which makes the devotional message clear:-

For unto him, that hath a troubled Spright;
Time has noe Joy, nor Heavens bright Face, noe Light.

The rhetorical procedure is complex. It seems as if the poem will be like an orthodox emblem, where the storm will be described and then interpreted and applied; or like some of Daniel's other poems, where an experience of a natural occurrence like that of dawn will lead to meditation on the poet's spiritual life. Only in the last few lines do we realise that there has been no storm except "in my bosome", and

that the description has been functioning as an allegory of the poet's state of mind.

6. Conclusion.

George Daniel's verse tribute to George Herbert ends with the line: "Horace in voice; and Casimire in wing".⁵⁵ There, in a nutshell, we have his most important poetic allegiances. He aspired to be one of those who, like Horace, "gloried in the name/Of Grove-frequenters",⁵⁶ with all that that implied of a noble and consistent philosophy of rural retirement; he shared Herbert's conception of poetry as a serious aid to the devout life and as a medium of praise to the Creator; and, like the Polish Horace, he brought together the philosophic, the devotional, and the rural in a single vision of the good life. His dedication to poetry is as complete and genuine as his dedication to the practice of the beatus ille philosophy, and indeed, for this man, poetry and the good life were inextricably bound up with each other. His duty to his God and himself was to live and write well. No less strong was his devotion to his native surroundings, where he was an attentive and inquiring witness of the "wonders" of the Creator's hand. When he sat beneath a tree to compose his verse - as he portrays himself doing in a painting in his manuscript - it was no imaginary tree culled from the pages of the poets, but the "crooked Hawthorne" or "our loved Elme".⁵⁷ His most fitting epitaph is the line which concludes the eclogue in which he defends his choice of residence and way of life:-

In Yorkshire may I Live, in Yorkshire Dye.⁵⁸

NOTES

1. For the sparse information available about Daniel's life see the introductions to the two editions of his work: The Poems of George Daniel, Esq. of Beswick, Yorkshire, ed. Rev. Alexander B. Grosart (St. George's, Blackburn, 1878), 4 vols; and The Selected Poems of George Daniel of Beswick, ed. Thomas B. Stroup (Kentucky, 1959).
2. It is evident from remarks in the poems that he disliked London. See also the introduction to Stroup's edition, p. xix.
3. In 'A Vindication of Poesie' he mentions, among more illustrious names, Falkland, Digby, Carew, Maine, Beaumont, Sandys, Randolph, Allen, Rutter, May, the Fletchers, Habington, Shirley, Stapleton, Davenant, Suckling, Cleveland, and Denham. Stroup notes that in the manuscript there are added, perhaps in Daniel's own hand, the names of Godolphin, Cartwright, Beaumont, and Montaigne (p. 187).
4. Stroup suggests that his "unusual interest in the poetry of his own day" may "have been stirred by personal association with the poets", but adds, "there is little direct evidence" (ed. cit., p. xix).
5. Daniel wrote two poems in praise of Sir Thomas Browne's work, one for Religio Medici and one for Pseudodoxia Epidemica. In the former of these he wrote: "And All I thinke on, is but what to say/To such a Freind, as I can never pay". This seems to imply that he knew Sir Thomas personally. These poems are in Stroup's ed., pp. 61-64.
6. See Grosart's introduction, p. xxiv. It is fascinating to speculate on the possibility that he may have known Andrew Marvell, who was only six years his junior, and spent his early life in Hull, not many miles from Beswick, which is near Beverley. Marvell is thought to have had Royalist sympathies in the early period of the civil troubles, and it is not unlikely that the sons of two educated families, living within fairly easy reach of each other, might have made each other's acquaintance.
7. See, for example, Ode XXXIV (Stroup, p. 128), and Ode XLVIII, st. 2 (Stroup, p. 148).
8. See above, Chapter IV, Section 1.
9. Grosart's ed., I, 66-67.
10. Stroup's ed., pp. 158-9. For the rest of this chapter page references to the odes of Scattered Fancies will be placed after quotations in the text, and will be to Stroup's edition.
11. See, for example, Milton's 'Lycidas', l. 26, and Crashaw's 'The Weeper'.
12. See above Chapter IV, Section 6.
13. Stroup's ed., pp. 19-20.
14. Note in Grosart's ed., I, 226.

- p. 94.

Chapter X

Henry Vaughan

Apart from four years spent as a student in Oxford and London (1638-1642)¹, and a brief involvement on the Royalist side in the Civil War², Henry Vaughan passed almost the whole of his long life (1621-1695) in his native village in Breconshire. He did not fully find himself as a poet until he devoted his energies to the religious verse that appeared in the two volumes of Silex Scintillans (1650 and 1655). The secular verse which he wrote up to that time is mostly of inferior quality. The contents of Poems (1646), Olor Iscanus (1651), and Thalia Rediviva (1678)³ are largely exercises on conventional themes, often competently executed, but deficient in creative intensity. Their brilliance is of the surface - a witty manipulation of other people's ideas, in a Jonsonian-Cavalier vein, rather than an exploration of individual modes of feeling or language. They have an extrinsic value, however, for the reader of the later, more mature, poems, because they show that the great lyrics of Silex Scintillans are not a completely new departure for Vaughan; there is no violent break in poetic method, or even imagery, between the secular and the religious poems. Rather, there is a deepening of the earlier qualities. Vaughan found, in his imaginative response to Christianity,⁴ the impulse that was necessary to transform the natural idiosyncrasies of his vision and idiom into great poetry.

1. Description in the Secular Poems.

The secular poems contain little that attempts to describe a

scene. Poems which seem to promise something of this kind are disappointing. 'Upon the Priorie Grove' is concerned with an actual place, "his usuall Retyrement", but this is only depicted as a "coole, leavie House".⁵ 'To the River Isca' (pp. 39-41) similarly gives no impression of the river and its environs. Most of the scenes in these volumes are avowedly unreal, landscapes of the imagination. 'To the River Isca', for example, evokes very briefly, and in generalised, literary terms, the "Regions more refin'd and faire" which poets are promoted to after hallowing the "happy banks" of earthly rivers with their song.⁶

There are, however, a few attempts in the secular poems to depict nature in more realistic terms. 'To Amoret gone from him' (p. 8) begins, as do many of the later poems, with an indication of time and place:-

Fancy, and I, last Evening walkt,
And, Amoret, of thee we talkt;
The West just then had stolne the Sun,
And his last blushes were begun:
We sate, and markt how every thing
Did mourne his absence. . .

The rest of the poem elaborates the idea of the mourning of nature, and ends with the appeal:-

If Creatures then that have no sence,
But the loose tye of influence . . .
At such vast distance can agree,
Why, Amoret, why should not wee.

The poem is a conventional appeal to the lady's grace, using nature's harmony as an analogy, but the poet's interest is clearly with the scene he is describing, rather than with its dialectical function.

His sense of the agreement of all created things, with the exception of man, is trivialised by its context here, but it is this same feeling that lies at the heart of many of his finest poems. It needed a serious situation, such as that provided by Vaughan's deepening spiritual experience, to develop its latent imaginative power.

'To Amoret, of the difference 'twixt him, and other Lovers, and what true Love is' (pp. 12-13) begins with a description of evening, concentrating on the phenomenon of meteors. Vaughan mingles the visual experience - "Marke", "you stay/And see them stray", "they. . . cheate your Eyes" - with the accepted meteorology of his day - "Those spurious flames suckt up from slime". He also adds a moralizing touch: "They shoot their tinsill beames, and vanities/Thredding with those false fires their way". The whole account functions as an emblem of "base, Sublunarie Lovers hearts". The method is similar to that employed in 'The Waterfall', which begins with a description of a natural object, and goes on to apply it to a human situation. Also similar, and an important pointer to the future, is the easy combination of moral and physical elements: the flames are quite credibly both "beames" and "vanities".

The date of Daphnis, which appears in Vaughan's last volume, is uncertain, though it may have been written in 1648 for the death of his brother William, and then revised in 1666 after Thomas Vaughan died.⁷ It contains the nearest approach to objective scene-painting in the secular poems:-

I heard last May (and May is still high Spring,)
 The pleasant Philomel her Vespers sing.
 The green wood glitter'd with the golden Sun
 And all the West like Silver shin'd; not one
 Black cloud, no rags, nor spots did stain
 The Welkins beauty: nothing frown'd like rain.
 But e're night came, that Scene of fine sights turn'd
 To fierce dark shewrs; the Air with lightnings burn'd;
 The woods sweet Syren rudely thus opprest,
 Gave to the Storm her weak and weary Breast.
 I saw her next day on her last cold bed;
 And Daphnis so, just so is Daphnis dead!
 (p. 676)

The point of this description in the immediate context is the death of the nightingale, and its analogy with the death of Daphnis. But the most powerful lines are those describing the wood and the storm which comes with the approach of evening. The first few lines are completely naturalistic, and suggest the vividness of visual experience in the contrasts of gold, green, silver, and black. With the phrase, "nothing frown'd like rain", Vaughan subtly effects a shift to the human significance of the scene. "Frown" brings with it the suggestion that nature is a living force, and this is developed through the words "fierce" and "opprest", and the climax of "Gave to the Storm her weak and weary Breast", which completes the transformation of the natural phenomenon into a sentient ravisher. This gradual movement from the naturalistic to the anthropomorphic presentation of natural details is a much more powerful method of expressing a sense of life in nature than the exclusively anthropomorphic method of 'To Amoret gone from him', where the result is merely graceful conceit. Here the imagination seems to have been at work, fusing into a single poetic statement the myth of Philomel, a strong sense of the real

forms of nature, and emotional grief at the loss of a loved one. The death of the brother is also absorbed into the natural processes of Creation. This last point is emphasised in the next few lines:-

So Violets, so doth the Primrose fall,
At once the Springs pride and its funeral.
Such easy sweets get off still in their prime,
And stay not here, to wear the soil of Time.

This passage indicates that this part of the poem was written after the death of William, since Vaughan could hardly be suggesting that Thomas, in 1666, was still a youth, cut off in his "prime". If so, then this is probably the first instance of his use of the Primrose image which occurs in several of the elegies to his younger brother in Silex Scintillans. These lines are another remarkable example of Vaughan's ability to see the abstract in terms of the physical world. Violets and primroses are conventional emblems of early death, but he manages to maintain their identity as real plants, while releasing their deeper emotional and metaphysical significance in the phrase: "to wear the soil of Time".

A few lines later, as an amplification of the idea that "worth oppressed mounts to a nobler height", Vaughan introduces an elaborate simile about a tree which grew even more vigorously after its topmost branches had been ruthlessly pruned. The simile is of interest because it begins with a description of part of the Breconshire landscape in which Vaughan passed his life:-

So where swift Isca from our lofty hills
With lowd farewells descends, and foming fills
A wider Channel, like some great port-vein,

With large rich streams to feed the humble plain:
 I saw an Oak, whose stately height and shade
 Projected far, a goodly shelter made.⁸
 (p. 677)

It could have been this very waterfall which provided the image for one of Vaughan's greatest religious meditations.

Towards the end of the poem, the poet turns to a discussion of the state of England, relating the evil times to the pastoral theme of the gradual deterioration of the world from the original perfection of the Golden Age. This brings him back to the thought of Daphnis, and to the initial image of the storm at sunset:-

The dregs and puddle of all ages now
 Like Rivers near their fall, on us do flow.
 Ah happy Daphnis! who, while yet the streams
 Can clear & warm (though but with setting beams,)
 Got through: and saw by that declining light
 His toil's and journey's end before the Night.

A night, where darkness lays her chains and Bars,
 And feral fires appear instead of Stars.
 But he along with the last looks of day
 Went hence, and setting (Sun-like) past away.
 What future storms our present sins do hatch
 Some in the dark discern, and others watch;
 Though foresight makes no Hurricane prove mild;
 Fury that's long fermenting, is most wild.

But see, while thus our sorrows we discourse,
Phoebus hath finish't his diurnal course.
 The shades prevail, each Bush seems bigger grown:
 Darkness (like State,) makes small things swell and frown.
 (pp. 679-680)

This extremely complex passage is a fine example of a poet thinking through his images - here all images from nature. The only way to reach the full meaning of these lines is to follow closely the expanding field of reference of the key images. Vaughan begins with a merging of metaphor and simile, which eliminates the boundary between the physical and the abstract. In the first line, the ages are

reduced to "dregs and puddle"; these are flowing over the present times "like Rivers near their fall". A simile, precisely observed from nature, is thus used to amplify an already established metaphor which has transformed the concept of time into a physical entity. Taking up the idea of muddied water, Vaughan rejoices that Daphnis "got through" while the stream (of time) still "ran clear and warm". The final word introduces the next image of the sun: the stream was warmed only "with setting beams". The image of "declining light" reinforces the image of the river's dregs and puddle, and leads to the concept of night. Night, the dark times in which the poet finds himself, is felt as a prison, holding its victims with "chains and Bars". Daphnis, as we saw in the account of his death at the beginning of the poem, was spared this prison by dying at sunset, his own life setting like the sun. The parenthetical "Sun-like" implies that Daphnis was naturally a part of the better world that existed before night fell. Returning to the earlier description, where storm followed the silver light of evening, Vaughan extends the natural image so as to predict worse troubles to come: "What future storms our present sins do hatch".

The last four lines effect a transition, drawing our thoughts back from gloomy fears to the natural setting, and at the same time suggesting that we have let our imaginations run away with us. The sensitively observed detail of the final couplet - that darkness distorts the size and shape of familiar objects⁹ - is a precise image for the psychological course that the meditation has taken. The

shadow cast by the death of Daphnis has led the imagination forward to all sorts of sombre fancies and speculations. But besides being a just image in itself, it is aptly subordinated to the dominant imagery of the passage, and of the poem as a whole. The device of breaking in on a train of thought provoked by the death of a "shepherd" had been used by Milton in 'Lycidas', but not with such a skilful maintenance of a single developing image.

Vaughan's poem ends with the usual note of hope expected in pastoral elegy, but this too is achieved within the terms of the main image-pattern:-

Farewel kind Damon! now the Shepherds Star
With beauteous looks smiles on us, though from far.
All creatures that were favourites of day
Are with the Sun retir'd and gone away.
While feral Birds send forth unpleasant notes,
And night (the Nurse of thoughts) sad thoughts promotes.
But Joy will yet come with the morning-light,
Though sadly now we bid good night!
(p. 680)

"All creatures", Daphnis among them, who were "favourites of day", have retired with the sun. But for those who remain, "the Shepherds Star" still "smiles", as a witness that, although night now prevails and (as we have seen) "sad thoughts promotes", joy will return to the earth "with the morning-light". In contrast to the frown that was associated with the coming of storm and darkness, the star - symbol of light - smiles.

This poem, in its choice of imagery and in its method of expressing ideas and feelings through the objects of external nature, epitomises Vaughan's poetic vision and procedure. More than that, it

has behind it the impulse that drives the great poems of Silex Scintillans. Continually recurring in the religious lyrics are the ideas that storms symbolize spiritual troubles; that this sinful life is a kind of night, in which the stars shine as beacons to guide us back to the God of Light; and that morning is both the time when all Creation rejoices in its Maker, and also a fitting emblem of the second coming of Christ. The specifically Christian application of these images is not made in Daphnis, where it would not be appropriate to the pastoral ethos, but the same intensity lies behind them, transforming them from the brilliant, but superficial, conceits of the Amoret poems into the powerful and meaningful symbols of Vaughan's maturity.

2. The Night Sky in the Secular Poems.

Traces of these symbols can be found elsewhere in the secular poems. 'To Amoret, Walking in a Starry Evening' (pp. 7-8) elaborates a conceited comparison of Amoret's eyes to the stars, and then plays with the idea of Amoret as a star influencing the poet. The use of the star imagery is trivial in this poem, but the language used to refer to the stars - "those elder fires . . . Scatter'd so high", "the vast Ring", "these golden glories" - looks forward to such later masterpieces as 'The World':-

I saw Eternity the other night
Like a great Ring of pure and endless light.
(p. 466)

The poem 'To Etesia (for Timander,) the first Sight' asks:-

Have you observ'd how the Day-star
 Sparkles and smiles and shines from far:
 Then to the gazer doth convey
 A silent, but a piercing Ray?
 (p. 643)

and continues with the orthodox comparison of the star to the lady's eye.

Also relevant here is 'A Rhapsodie', which describes the murals in a room in the Globe Tavern:-

That artificiall Cloud with it's curl'd brow,
 Tels us 'tis late; and that blew space below
 Is fir'd with many Stars; Marke, how they breake
 In silent glaunces o're the hills, and speake
 The Evening to the Plaines; where shot from far,
 They meet in dumbe salutes, as one great Star.
 (p. 10)

There is a hint of the later ascription to stars of the power to communicate with the lower creation, in the words "glaunces" and "speake". In this, and the previous examples. Vaughan emphasises the sensuous actuality of the things he is describing. He postulates an observer. We are told to "Marke, how they breake", and in the other poems, Amoret is told to "spy" the stars, and Etesia is asked "Have you observ'd?" In 'To Etesia', the "gazer" is specifically referred to, and in 'A Rhapsodie' the cloud "tells us". Another device is the use of demonstratives in place of the vaguer articles: "That . . . Cloud", "that blew space below"; and in 'To Amoret': "those elder fires". The vividness of the scene also depends largely on the fact that the relationship of one object to another is indicated. There is a progression of the eye down from stars to hills to plains: each component of the scene is given a place, instead of

being merely mentioned. This composition of a landscape is rare in the seventeenth century, the descriptive method being usually that of simple enumeration of items.¹⁰

3. The Sympathetic Imagination in the Secular Poems.

One of the most striking features of Vaughan's later verse is his sense of sympathy for God's creatures, even, indeed especially, for plant-life and inanimate objects. There are some hints of this peculiar sensibility in the secular poems. In the simile of the oak tree in Daphnis, Vaughan relates how:-

. . . the curs'd owner from the trembling top
To the firm brink, did all those branches lop,
And in one hour what many years had bred,
The pride and beauty of the plain lay dead.
(p. 677)

This feeling for the fate of trees is an instance of that expressed not only in Vaughan's own 'The Timber', but also much later by Thomas Hardy in 'Throwing a Tree'.¹¹ But Vaughan does not leave his subject there; he uses his image to show that nature is a great restoring power:-

But Nature, which (like vertue) scorns to yield
Brought new recruits and succours to the Field;
For by next Spring the check'd Sap wak'd from sleep
And upwards still to feel the Sun did creep,
Till at those wounds, the hated Hower made,
There sprang a thicker and a fresher shade.
(p. 678)

Vaughan never merely describes a natural phenomenon or process: he always applies it in some way. Here he inserts the moral lesson - "like vertue" - and completes his simile: "So thrives afflicted Truth!" But the poetic force of these lines depends on his ability

to feel as something more than an intellectual fact the way in which nature works. He imagines the sap rising through the mutilated branches and healing the wounds, in response to the call of the life-giving sun.

Another example of this kind of sympathy occurs in the poem 'To the best, and most accomplish'd Couple --'. He wishes them health and pleasures:-

Sweet as the flowres first breath, and Close
As th'unseen spreadings of the Rose,
When he unfolds his Curtain'd head,
And makes his bosome the Suns bed.
(p. 57)

The sense of intimacy with the secret life of the flower, especially in the phrase "th'unseen spreadings", suggests a comparison with Blake's 'The Sick Rose' and such Keatsian remarks as "fruit ripening in stillness".¹² Nevertheless, in spite of this quality, Vaughan's lines belong quite obviously to his own age. The intuitive glimpse of the rose's existence as a living creature is quickly absorbed into the conceit of the curtains and the bed.

Vaughan was well aware of the emblem tradition to which much of his poetry bears a close relationship. He glances at it in 'To Etesia: the first Sight':-

The gallant Tulip and the Rose,
Emblems which some use to disclose
Bodyed Idea's.¹³ (p. 643)

But because of his keen sense of the life of plants, he could instil a certain amount of freshness into his use of conventional emblems. In the tribute 'To his Learned Friend and Loyal Fellow-Prisoner,

Thomas Powel of Cant. Doctor of Divinity', he imagines one of the most popular of emblematic items as a real flower growing in the soil, rather than simply drawing upon its significance:-

But as the Mary-gold in Feasts of Dew
And early Sun-beams, though but thin and few
Unfolds its self, then from the Earths cold breast
Heaves gently, and salutes the hopeful East . . .
(p. 624)

What has been said so far should suffice to indicate that the lines along which Vaughan's poetic genius was to develop had already been laid down before he turned to the religious themes which prompted his greatest works. His sensibility to, and perceptiveness of, certain aspects of the natural world; his ability to exploit his sense of the interdependence and interpenetration of the physical and the non-physical; even the tone of occasional phrases - all these were part of his poetic equipment when he came to express the new vision and experience that came with his serious commitment to Christianity.

4. The Translations.

F.E. Hutchinson considers that the translations which take a prominent place in Olor Iscanus, and a few of which appear in Thalia Rediviva, were all "probably written by 1651".¹⁴ They may well represent Vaughan's first turning to more serious themes. The kind of poem he chose to translate is certainly significant. Boethius and Casimire both deal with themes which were to occupy his thoughts throughout Silex Scintillans, and often make use of natural imagery that is similar to Vaughan's in both subject and application.

Boethius has frequent recourse to star imagery. In Lib. 2.

Metrum 2., there is a simple appeal to the stars as an image of abundance: Fortune may favour man with as much gold as there is sand on the shore:-

Or bright stars in a Winter-night
Decking their silent Orbs with light.
(p. 81)

The adjective "silent" has the feel of Vaughan's later references to the stars.

Metrum 3. of the same book begins with a description of dawn which looks forward to 'The Dawning'.¹⁵ Boethius merely uses his description as an example of the changes in nature, so as to reconcile man to the changeableness of Fate. But although Vaughan sees more symbolic value in the phenomenon, the terms in which he perceives the approach of dawn are similar. Closer to Vaughan's own use of star imagery is Metrum 2 of Book I, in which the soul is like an eclipsed star, and later measures its condition by its ability to spy into the secrets of the skies. Metrum 5. of Book I (p. 78) appeals to the "great builder of this starrie frame", and cites a number of examples from nature to show that everything fits into the scheme of Creation, except man. The emphasis is different in Boethius's comparison of the stability of nature and the waywardness of man, but it is basically the same intuition that appears in many of Vaughan's finest poems.¹⁶ Metrum 5. from Book II celebrates a theme that Vaughan was to return to in his own way later: "Happy that first white age!" and contains a passage that must have appealed to his affection for plant-life:-

The shadie Pine in the Suns heat
 Was their Coole and known Retreat,
 For then 'twas not cut down, but stood
 The youth and glory of the wood.
 (p. 83)

The poems that Vaughan chose to translate from Casimire are even closer than those of Boethius to the sort of original poetry he was to write. When Casimire looked at the stars, he felt a longing to join them in the better world that they symbolized:-

He in the Evening, when on high
 The Stars shine in the silent skye
 Beholds th'eternall flames with nirth,
 And globes of light more large then Earth,
 Then weeps for Joy, and through his tears
 Looks on the fire-enamel'd Spheres,
 Where with his Saviour he would be
 Lifted above mortalitie.¹⁷

What this and other poems by Casimire lack is the feeling of personal involvement that is so strong in Vaughan's poetry. One of the Silurist's greatest gifts is his ability to impart an urgency and immediacy to both the descriptive and the spiritual in his treatment of natural imagery.

Also in Casimire, Vaughan found something of his own sympathy for plants. In Lib. 3. Ode 22, youth is likened to:-

. . . a Rose which in the dawne
 The aire with gentle breath doth fawne
 And whisper too, but in the houres
 Of night is sullied with smart showres.
 (p. 87)

And in 'The Praise of a Religious Life' (p. 90), the flowers function as examples to man, consciously striving towards their Maker. The lines about the rose just quoted also exploit the metaphoric values

of dawn and night in a way very similar to Vaughan's later methods.

In the later sequence of translations from Boethius published in Thalia Rediviva, Vaughan rendered into English Metrum 6 Lib. 4, which is concerned with the bond which keeps all the Creation in harmony, and which turns to the stars as a witness:-

Who would unclouded see the Laws
Of the supreme, eternal Cause,
Let him with careful thoughts and eyes
Observe the high and spacious Skyes.
There in one league of Love the Stars
Keep their old peace, and shew our wars.
(p. 651)

The contrast of warring man and harmonious nature, and the role of the stars as spiritual teachers, are both recurring features of Vaughan's own poetic vision. Also characteristic of his methods is the insistence on the evidence of one's own eyes: the seeker is told to "observe" the heavens "with careful thoughts and eyes".

Later in the same poem, Vaughan found the idea which was to be the basis of one of his most famous lyrics, 'The Retreat':-

This is the Cause why ev'ry living
Creature affects an endless being.
A grain of this bright love each thing
Had giv'n at first by their great King;
And still they creep (drawn on by this:)
And look back towards their first bliss.
(p. 653)

Besides the notion of striving to get back to a former state of beatitude, these lines also contain a reference to the Hermetic concept of the seed, or "grain" of immortality that links all created things, an idea which fired Vaughan's imagination in such poems as 'Cock-crowing'.

This brief survey of Vaughan's early secular work has shown that he naturally turned to certain aspects of nature, and that the kind of poetry which attracted his attention as a translator used those aspects to express spiritual and moral truths. We can now turn to the poetry for which he is remembered, and see how the already existing poetic idiom was strengthened and deepened as it came into contact with a personal vision that could make the most of its potentialities.

5. The Redemption of Nature and the Approach of Light.

In the survey of philosophic ideas provided in Chapter II above,¹⁸ we saw some of the consequences of the seventeenth-century need to rethink the relationship between man, nature, and God. The scientist's desire to free his investigation of nature from the stigma of being a "black art", and the Christian Platonist's and orthodox theologian's concern to demonstrate that there was a vital connection between the world of matter and the world of spirit, both directed attention to the status of the physical universe. Eric La Guardia has examined the effect of this movement of thought on the treatment of nature in three works: The Faerie Queene, All's Well that Ends Well, and Comus. In his preliminary discussion of the subject, he makes some remarks about its general significance for the literature of the period:-

As a poetic theme, this desire to declare the existence of a continuity between the natural and the supernatural takes the significant form of the restoration of nature itself and man within nature. This Renaissance tradition of thought and expression which can, in general, be identified by its concern over the breach between the order of nature and the order of

spirit, and by its effort to affirm some kind of reconciliation of the two orders, is less interested in the salvation of man in a realm beyond nature than it is in the restoration of man within nature and the redemption of the natural world itself. Such an interest requires that nature be properly used rather than transcended, for the emphasis remains upon nature even though its restoration consists of releasing those forces which link it with the world of spirit.¹⁹

Vaughan's treatment of nature occupies an important place in this development. In his poetry, the redemption of nature is already an accomplished fact. He does not look to nature for intellectual proof of God's existence or attributes.²⁰ Nor does he, like George Daniel,²¹ explore the relationship between man, nature and God philosophically. His conception of harmony between the Creator and His Creation is founded on intuition rather than reason. As Helen C. white has written:-

It is not simply that he believes that God may be found in his creatures. It is rather that he has felt God there in his own immediate experience. Indeed, it is almost as if he had felt God there without at first being aware of what it was he had felt there, as if only after he had experienced in its fulness this overwhelming impression, had he been able to identify it. It is the feeling, the awareness that comes first.²²

But Vaughan does not seem to have been drawn towards God through his contemplation of plants and stars: his love of nature was not the agent of his conversion. It is rather as if his embracement of the Christian faith had revealed to him the full significance of his earlier intuitions, and enabled him to reinterpret in the light of Christian doctrine experiences which had previously lacked co-ordination and direction. This fact has important consequences for his religious poetry, since it determines the ways in which natural details will be used. G. L. Bethell has some interesting remarks in

this connection:-

Vaughan interpreted the lower orders of being through the higher and not, like the 'Baconian' modern scientists, the higher through the lower. Though he pored over the Book of the Creatures in order to discern more clearly its supernatural meaning, he came to that study already equipped with a dogmatic outline of the scheme of Christian theology: creation, fall, redemption, restoration. As he read that into his experience of natural phenomena, things fell into their proper places and proportions; and it was because nature could be generally understood in terms of theology, that the details of natural processes might be used analogically to cast light upon spiritual problems.²³

Vaughan finds, then, in the natural world the peace and harmony that the affairs of men lack. Man can regain this sense of harmony between the Creation and its Maker at certain moments when the harmony is most intensely expressed. For Vaughan that time is pre-eminently the hour of dawn.²⁴ In 'The Morning-watch' (pp. 424-5) he describes how he shares the exultation of the creatures as they praise their Creator. His sense of the "great Chime/And Symphony of nature", of the harmonious balance between the "rising winds" and the "falling springs", of "all things" agreeing in their adoration of God, is the most abiding characteristic of his attitude to the created universe. But he is rarely able to join in the symphony himself, or to see man as part of it. Much more common is the contrast between the faithfulness and stability of the creatures and the waywardness and perversity of mankind. The untitled poem, beginning "Sure there's a tye of Bedyes", treats this theme:-

Absents within the Line Conspire, and Sense
Things distant doth unite,

Herbs sleep unto the East, and some fowles thence
 Watch the Returns of light;
 But hearts are not so kind: false, short delights
 Tell us the world is brave,
 And wrap us in Imaginary flights
 Wide of a faithfull grave.
 (p. 429)

These lines illustrate how Vaughan's new and vital preoccupations have deepened his original material. The detail of natural objects turning towards the sun had been used as a fanciful conceit in 'To Amoret gone from him'. In Daphnis we saw how light was becoming a symbol of a better existence. Now, in this and many other poems in Silex Scintillans, light has assumed its full traditional significance as an attribute of the God-head. Man, lacking the simple wisdom and faith of the herbs and fowls, is seduced from vigilance by the "brave" world.

The idea of the creatures watching for the dawn and for the coming of God to the world becomes so well established a part of Vaughan's poetic idiom, that he can produce powerful effects by the most fleeting references to it, as in 'The Night', which begins with thoughts of the first Christmas night:-

Where trees and herbs did watch and peep
 And wonder, while the Jews did sleep.
 (p. 522)

In 'Palm-Sunday' it is the creatures, not mankind, that he calls upon to rejoice at the coming of Christ:-

Trees, flowers & herbs; birds, beasts & stones,
 That since man fell, expect with groans
 To see the lamb, which all at once,
 Lift up your heads and leave your moans!

For here comes he
 Whose death will be
 Mans life, and your full liberty.
 (p. 501)

This appeal to the creatures, and especially the plants, has a complex ancestry: it is reminiscent both of the pastoral hyperbole²⁵ and of certain passages in the Psalms.²⁶ The interesting point is that Vaughan seems to be intimating that the animals, plants, and even the stones have a special concern in the sacrifice of Christ, for it will not only secure man's life, but also their "full liberty". There are suggestions elsewhere that Vaughan believed that the lesser creation would benefit from the redemption of man. Indeed, in 'The Book', he makes specific reference to a general resurrection:-

O knowing, glorious spirit! when
 Thou shalt restore trees, beasts and men,
 when thou shalt make all new again . . .
 (p. 540)

The most celebrated expression of Vaughan's belief that nature was conscious of the will of God and his plan of salvation, is found in the poem headed by a quotation from St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans, chapter 8, verse 19: "Etenim res Creatae exerto Capite observantes expectant revelationem Filiorum Dei" (pp. 432-3). Part of the power of this superb poem stems from the sense of delighted vindication in the opening lines:-

And do they so? have they a Sense
 Of ought but Influence?
 Can they their heads lift, and expect,
 And grone too? why th'Elect
 Can do no more. . .

Vaughan's intuition seems to have led him to believe in the animation of that section of creation below the animals; the pastoral conceit of the Amoret poems had become a vital element in his response to nature. Now he finds his intuition confirmed by the primary source of revelation, the Bible. The first two lines look back to the idea of 'To Amoret gone from him':-

If Creatures then that have no sence,
But the loose tye of influence . . .

The words of the Apostle which head "And do they so?" indicate that the creatures are even more closely in touch with the divine than the early Vaughan had allowed. This context of passionate belief in the real devotion of stones and trees to their Maker, adds an imaginative power to Vaughan's wish to become one of them - "I would I were a stone, or tree,/Or flowre by pedigree" - which similar conceits in Herbert's poetry lack.²⁷

Man is felt to be not only disobedient and unstable in comparison with the rest of nature, he is also ignorant of fundamental matters. 'The Constellation' takes up this theme. Looking at the heavens at night, the poet is moved by the qualities he sees there:-

Silence, and light, and watchfulness with you
Attend and wind the Clue,
No sleep, nor sloth assailes you, but poor man
Still either sleeps, or slips his span.
Perhaps some nights hee'l watch with you, and peep
When it were best to sleep,
Dares know Effects, and Judge them long before,
When th'herb he treads knows much, much more.
(p. 469)

Man's inquiring mind and daring reason presumes to "know" and "judge"

things which, if they are to be apprehended at all, can only be grasped by faith and intuition. For all the natural philosopher's subtle searching into "Effects", he is ignorant of the simple truths that the plant he crushes scornfully underfoot is master of.²⁸

6. The School of Nature.

This brings us to one of Vaughan's major uses of natural details in poetry: nature as a teacher. If the herb knows more than man, then it follows that man should be able to learn from it. One of the poet's first pieces of advice in 'Rules and Lessons' is:-

Walk with thy fellow-creatures: note the hush
And whispers amongst them. There's not a Spring,
Or Leafe but hath his Morning-hymn; Each Bush
And Oak doth know I AM.

(p. 436)

watching 'The Starre' which he sees above him, "wind and curle, and wink and smile", he decides:-

Yet, seeing all things that subsist and be,
Have their Commissions from Divinitie,
And teach us duty, I will see
What man may learn from thee.²⁹

(p. 489)

For natural details are not simply passive teachers - things from which man may profit if he has the wit. They have definite "Commissions" from God. 'The Tempest' makes this more explicit:-

How is man parcell'd out? how ev'ry hour
Shews him himself, or something he should see?
This late, long heat may his Instruction be,
And tempests have more in them than a showr.

(p. 460)

After a passage describing how nature renews herself by sending rain to nourish her withering flowers, the poem continues:-

O that man could do so! that he would hear
 The world read to him! all the vast expanse
 In the Creation shed, and slav'd to sense
 Makes up but lectures for his eye, and ear.
 (p. 461)

It is part of God's plan, in the wisdom of His foreknowledge, that all created things should act as "snares" to gain the heart of man. Falling waters "Chide, and fly up"; mists "Quit their first beds & mount"; "trees, herbs, flowres, all/Strive upwards stil, and point him the way home".

The lessons that man can learn from nature are not always so emblematic and so neatly logical as those suggested in 'The Tempest'. Sometimes they are nearer to the intimations of another realm of existence that Blake and Wordsworth could perceive in the material world. There are occasionally moments when Vaughan knows something of Blake's ability, expressed in 'Auguries of Innocence':-

To see a World in a Grain of Sand
 And a Heaven in a Wild Flower,
 Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand
 And Eternity in an hour.³⁰

Nearest in tone to Blake are the lines from 'The Retreat':-

When on some gilded Cloud, or flowre
 My gazing soul would dwell an houre,
 And in those weaker glories spy
 Some shadows of eternity.
 (p. 419)

It is interesting to note that this passage comes from Vaughan's famous poem about infancy, while Blake's comes from a poem about innocence. The state in which this kind of intuition is possible must be one of simplicity. The point is reinforced if one considers

another of Vaughan's works, printed next to 'The Retreate' in Silex Scintillans, 'Vanity of Spirit'.³¹ The poem begins with a desire to know who framed the spheres and formed the clouds. Finding no answer, the poet turns to subtle methods of search, and probes into the secret places of nature. Having "past/Through all the Creatures", he at last examines himself and finds "Traces, and sounds of a strange kind". By the light of "weake beames, and fires", to the sound of "Ecchoes beaten from th'eternall hills", he finds "A peece of much antiquity", covered with broken "Hyerogliphicks". But the light fails before he has deciphered them. The poem ends with resignation:-

Since in these veyls my Ecclips'd eye
May not approach thee, (for at night
Who can have commerce with the light?)
I'lle disapparell, and to buy
But one half glaunce, most gladly dye.
(p. 419)

If this poem is read in conjunction with 'The Retreate', which follows it, then the "Ecclips'd Eye" can be read as a reference not only to the earthly condition of man but more precisely to the loss of the child's vision, which "looking back . . . Could see a glimpse of his bright-face". The point seems to be that what man with all his gifts of ingenuity and intellect cannot achieve, the child in the humility of his "Angell-infancy" can.

A more matter-of-fact expression of the same mode of perception occurs in 'Rules and Lessons':-

Thou canst not misse his Praise; Each tree, herb, flowre
Are shadows of his wisedome, and his Pow'r.
(p. 438)

With these two passages goes a mysterious remark in 'The Stone'. The poem meditates on the verse in the Book of Joshua, in which a stone is called to witness the words of the Lord to his people. Vaughan suggests that he has in some strange way been made privy to the communion that God holds with his lesser works:-

But I (Alas!)
 Was shown one day in a strange glass
 That busie commerce kept between
 God and his Creatures, though unseen.
 (p. 515)

This poem is also interesting as another example of Vaughan's finding a Biblical text to support his feelings that the inanimate creation was imbued with some kind of consciousness. As he says later in the poem:-

. . . and stones
 Which some think dead, shall all at once
 with one attesting voice detect
 Those secret sins we least suspect.
 (p. 515)

7. Types and Symbols: 'The Water-fall' and 'The Showre'.

The poems just discussed are concerned with the fact that man may learn from nature, and allude to this explicitly. Many of Vaughan's finest poems rely on this fact, but put it into practice rather than talking about it. A close examination of several of these pieces will serve to focus attention on some of the salient features of Vaughan's use of natural details.

'The Water-fall' (pp. 537-8) is a convenient poem to begin with, as it illustrates his method of discovering general truths in the workings of nature. In structure, it has obvious affinities with the

popular emblems of the period. The first section provides a picture, and the second draws the significance from it. Also similar to the emblem tradition is the kind of moral that is extracted. Each detail in the descriptive section is seen to comment on life in terms of the scheme of Christian doctrine: the falling water reminds the poet of the frailty of flesh, of Baptism, of earthly transience, of the invisible estate that awaits the faithful soul after death. But there the similarities end. The emblem that is to be moralized, whether a picture, as in Quarles's work, or a verbal description, as in Hawkins's Partheneia Sacra, never functions as a symbol in the emblem books. Each detail is scrupulously assigned a meaning, but the active principle in the process is the reason, not the imagination. One feels that the significance has been imposed from outside - that another emblem would have done just as well to make the same point. In 'The water-fall', the description has strong symbolic force. It is as if the natural phenomenon had taken hold of Vaughan's imagination, and cried out its significance to him. The fact that this significance is orthodox Christian doctrine does not lessen the power of the imaginative act. It indicates not that Vaughan mechanically exploited given ideas, imposing them on the natural scene, but that Christian doctrine and imagery were vital ingredients of the normal processes of his imagination. Doctrine and the perceived detail from nature fuse in the act of creation. One can see how integral a part of Vaughan's mind the teachings of the Church were, by examining closely the initial description of the water-fall. Already present

in the terms of the physical description are suggestions of the spiritual significance of the stream. The water is connected with the non-physical in the very first line: it is flowing not through a visible landscape, but through "times silent stealth". (One remembers how the emblematic flowers of Daphnis were growing in "the soil of time".) It is then described in human terms: it chides and calls, and hesitates fearfully before the drop. The phrase "common pass", and the tone of fatality in "All must descend", hint at the symbolic nature of this fall, which is clinched by the more explicit image of the "deep and rocky grave". The Christian hope is apparent in "Not to an end", and by the time the last line is reached, the "longer course more bright and brave" is assured of its acceptance as a double description, of the re-established smooth flow of the river, and of the better life after death. The effect of this passage is that of an instantaneous apprehension of the sensuous and the spiritual in one movement of mind, rather than the deduction of one from the other. It is this kind of moment that M. M. Mahood accounts for when she speaks of "Vaughan's vivid awareness of the physical world's intersection with the spiritual world".³²

But, although the water-fall is nearer to symbol than emblem, Vaughan's realization of its significance is strictly conditioned by beliefs that are extraneous to it. This limitation, or channeling, of significance can be seen more clearly if the poem is compared with Wordsworth's 'The Simplicon Pass',³³ which arrives at "sublime truths" through contemplation of river scenery. But in the Romantic poem,

the physical details of the landscape play a much more important part in the actual generation of emotion and vision. The mountain river is a self-sufficient expression of an eternal reality whose very existence seems to be bound up with the temporal phenomena through which it is perceived. Wordsworth interprets "the stationary blasts of waterfalls", the "torrents", and the "black drizzling crags" as:-

Characters of the great Apocalypse,
The types and symbols of Eternity,
Of first, and last, and midst, and without end;

and one feels that he comes to his intuition of these transcendent modes of being through their physical embodiments in the scenery. Vaughan's understanding of an eternal reality, on the other hand, does not come from his contact with nature's objects. Those objects merely prompt in him a more intense awareness of beliefs and attitudes which he already possesses. The sight of the water-fall stimulates a meditation which leads him to the established Christian truths: that God will restore what he takes away; that sins can be cleansed, through the "sacred wash" of Baptism and redemption by the "Lamb", who goes to the "Fountains of life"; that God's Spirit "hatch'd" the world, and can alone lead man to truth. And in the last four lines, he makes it clear that the "invisible estate" is beyond and independent of the scene before his eyes:-

O my invisible estate,
My glorious liberty, still late!
Thou art the Channel my soul seeks,
Not this with Cataracts and Creeks.

The river's water is a "useful Element and clear", because it is the physical symbol of Baptism, and because it helps him to meditate on spiritual things, but it never becomes, like Wordsworth's "stationary blasts of water-falls", the very embodiment of spiritual forces, part of the "workings of one mind". M. M. Mahood places Vaughan very succinctly in relation to other quasi-mystical writers, in both his own and later ages:-

His certainty that Nature is only a shadow of a greater world saves him from the excesses of many illuminist sects and seers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, for whom the Inner Light seemed to comprise the whole of divinity; and it distinguishes his thought from the pantheism of some Romantic nature poets.³⁴

The contemplation of a natural phenomenon has a slightly different function in 'The Showre' (pp. 412-413). The first stanza promises a treatment similar to that of 'The Water-fall'. It begins by fixing attention on an aspect of nature, which is at once felt to be of more than physical importance. The shower is born; the lake is "drowsie"; it breathes the shower from its bosom; and so on through imagery of sickness and remorse. The device pointed out in some of the secular poems is of prime effectiveness in creating the sense of immediacy here. Vaughan insists on his role as an observer, and on the actuality of the scene, by employing the demonstrative in place of an article: "That drowsie Lake".³⁵ Also, instead of merely enumerating the items of the picture, he relates them to each other, and conveys an impression of the workings of nature: one follows the

progress of the shower, from its origins as a mist rising from the surface of the water, to its return to the earth as rain. But it is the process itself which matters, and the interpretation that is put on it by the imagery, rather than the visual qualities of the scene. Vaughan is not a landscape poet. However much he may delight in the sights of the countryside, as a poet it is the movement of life within the scene that inspires him.³⁶

With the second stanza, one realizes that the poem is to develop in a different way from 'The Water-fall'. The phrase: "Ah! it is so with me", introduces a more personal element than anything in the other poem. In 'The Water-fall', the "I" is a representative figure, the medium for a meditation which ranges over universal Christian truths; in 'The Showre', the "I" is a medium for sentiment. The shower is felt to be a relevant parallel to a particular state of spirit, rather than a symbol of facts like Baptism and redemption and resurrection, like the water-fall. In other words, the natural details in this poem function as the physical counterpart of a personal problem, not as a stimulus to meditation on known facts. In neither case is nature presented, or apprehended "pure", simply for its own sake. As Helen C. White has aptly said:-

Very seldom is any natural phenomenon, any moment of nature, viewed in its literal light. Almost always nature comes suffused in feeling, with the light of its implications upon its calm surface.³⁷

In 'The Water-fall' the implications are universal and derived from the Bible; in 'The Showre' they are private, and derived from personal

experience.

The poem has a syllogistic structure, similar to that of an emblem: stanza I describes a state in nature; stanza II describes a state in the poet; stanza III resolves the problem of the poet by pushing further the analogy on which the poem rests. Once again, one sees evidence of Vaughan's awareness of the interpenetration of the spiritual and the physical. The shower can be described in terms of human feelings, and man can be described in terms of natural objects, without any sense of contrivance. The mist "breath'd" from the lake and the "lazier breath" of the man are two manifestations of the same essential process.³⁸ Both result from sickness - of the waters or of the spirit - and both are eased by the shedding of tears. The "Sun-shine" of the last line has complete realization in both realms.

Although this is clearly a more personal poem than the previous one, it is much less self-conscious than many of the works of Donne or Herbert. The middle stanza deflects attention from the "I" to the universal "Love", and even though the personal situation dominates the third stanza, the telling expansion into the universal for a few lines keeps the poem free of morbid introspection. The very fact that the natural imagery stresses the relation of the poet's state to the rest of nature also helps to achieve this healthy tone.

8. Empathy: 'The Bird' and 'The Timber'.

'The Bird' (pp. 496-7) will help to focus attention on another aspect of Vaughan's use of natural details. It opens with one of the

loveliest examples of his ability to feel himself into the life of a natural creature:-

Hither thou com'st: the busie wind all night
 Blew through thy lodging, where thy own warm wing
 Thy pillow was. Many a sullen storm

 Rain'd on thy bed
 And harmless head.

Once again the poet begins by setting up a realistic situation, as an observer is implied by the adverb, "Hither". Then he turns from the immediate moment to express his sense of what it must have been like to be the bird during the past stormy night. The singing of the bird, in stanza II, is interpreted as a hymn of praise,³⁹ and this provokes a meditation on the care of the Creator for his works, and the fact that: "All things that be, praise him".

At this point, the poem seems to move away from its original image of the bird, and to embark on a series of statements whose lack of organic unity seems to be emphasised by the variations of stanza form. The inanimate objects - hills, valleys, stones, winds, streams - all praise God; each spirit is a star, which rather mysteriously, "Both mornings makes, and evenings there"; the birds that sing Matins are complemented by birds of darkness; the land even turns to brimstone towards the end of the poem. The key to this perplexing series of images, however, is to be found in the opening description: the bird sings now that morning has come, but was beaten by storms during the hours of darkness. An understanding of the significance of night and morning in Vaughan's imaginative language is crucial here. (We saw something of it in Daphnis.) Also we must

be continually alert to the easy commerce between physical and spiritual in this poet's idiom. Morning, for Vaughan, is the time of closest contact with God - the time at which man can share most vividly the sense of communion which the creatures retained when man was estranged from his Maker by the Fall. ('The Morning-watch' was cited as his fullest expression of this feeling.) So when the hills and valleys, through the medium of "Praise and Prayer", "Make lesser mornings, when the great are done", they are reproducing in their own spiritual experience the exultation of which the "great" morning when the sun rises anew each day on the Creation is the amplest expression. The equation of star and spirit is a common one in Vaughan's verse, and when he tells us that its light "Both mornings makes, and evenings there", one must bring to an understanding of the line the idea that morning and evening have spiritual equivalents in the soul. The poem next brings us back to its opening image to make the point clear. Besides the "Birds of light" (one of which is the bird of the poem), there are "dark fowls" that frequent "the shades of night". Even the change in rhyme scheme contributes to the contrast: the four lines of the stanza are bound in by the echoing "glad-sad". The next four lines reverse the movement from stormy darkness to joyful morning evoked in the first two stanzas: the night of the soul comes with mourning, howling, and the turning of the "pleasant Land" of light to brimstone. The final couplet rounds the poem off with another turn of the wheel, and neatly sums up the essence of the process:-

Brightness and mirth, and love and faith, all flye,
Till the Day-spring breaks forth again from high.

'The Bird' has affinities with poems like 'The Showre', which express in terms of natural phenomena the cycles of spiritual depression and exultation. In many of these poems, Vaughan develops an imagery of inner weather, which is similar to the shower of the previous poem and the storm at the start of this one.⁴⁰ Where 'The Bird' differs from these other expressions of the soul's moods, is in its objective method. As in 'The Water-fall', it begins with the natural object perceived in nature, and derives a universal significance from it. It remains consistently universal, never, as in 'The Showre', appealing explicitly to a personal situation. As a whole poem, it is one of Vaughan's most triumphant expressions of the essential unity of the processes at work in the Creation.

Much has been written about the influence of Hermetic doctrines on Vaughan's poetry. Some remarks from the most complete study of this subject will serve to introduce the next poem:-

Vaughan does more than entertain these beliefs in thought. He lives them in emotion, and then images them in poetry. The result lies not so much in frequency of direct reference to Hermetic tradition as in a charging of his poetic atmosphere with this idea of 'sympathy'. Meeting, as we think, some predisposition in himself, it becomes an intuitive knowledge, like an inward sense of touch, directed towards the objects of Nature.⁴¹

The "intuitive knowledge, like an inward sense of touch" would be another way of describing the sensibility which produced the initial account of 'The Bird'. It is even more suggestive when applied to the extraordinary opening stanzas of 'The Timber' (pp. 497-499).

Vaughan seems to be presenting to us what it would feel like to be a felled tree. He creates for us a sense of the environment of the tree as it once lived, washed by dew and rain, its branches built among by birds. Very strong in the second stanza is a feeling of the continuity of nature: new birds have replaced the old; new trees grow; and at opposite ends of the scale of existence, the skies and the violet survive all vicissitudes. In stanzas III and IV, Vaughan takes us inside the being of the tree, where all the normal joys and preoccupations of plant life - light and growth - are extinguished. All that remains of former life is the uneasiness at the approach of a storm. The poem then turns aside from the natural object, and draws parallels with human experience. The storm is seen to be a type of sin, and the uneasiness a type of remorse. The imagery of trees is not called on again till near the end when the "trees of life" are introduced. These can only be watered by "streams sent from above". This is another of Vaughan's standard symbols: dew or showers become a mark of God's grace, shed from above. As in 'The Showre', "Some drops may fall" before death and restore the withered soul, but a clear and "ever running" spring exists only "above the skie", like the "longer course more bright and brave" of the river in 'The Water-fall'. In fact, what Vaughan is doing in this poem is very similar to what he did in that one. It is really different in kind from the sort of Romantic poetry which it superficially resembles. One thinks naturally of examples of "intuitive knowledge" or Negative Capability in Keats: of the "hush'd, cool-rooted flowers, fragrant-eyed"; or of the famous opening stanza of 'The Eve of Saint Agnes'.⁴²

But for Keats, as for Wordsworth in 'The Simplicon Pass', each natural object is a naked thing, devoid of any external significance. He feels into the life of the object because there is nothing between him and it but his own sensibility. Vaughan approaches the dead tree, however, with a text in mind: "He that is dead, is freed from sin" (Romans, Chapter 6, verse 7); and from the start, his response to it is conditioned by his religion. Because of the different cultural climate in which he lived, his Keats-like sensibility is channeled into a different course than it might have taken later. He is not, as A. Alvarez argues,⁴³ creating his feelings in terms of his subject, but rather fusing in a single imaginative act two vital elements of his experience - the intuitive and the Christian - the former of which, because of the established habits of thought of his period, could scarcely have found expression in isolation.

9. The Seed Growing Secretly.

'The Timber' is Vaughan's most extensive treatment of the subject of the life of plants, but as was shown in the survey of his early poems, he was naturally drawn to imagery of growing things. R.A. Durr has demonstrated⁴⁴ that there are three basic figures which continually recur in Vaughan's poems: Courtship and Marriage, which is outside the scope of this study; the Quest or Pilgrimage, which will be dealt with later; and the most important, which will be explored in this section, God's seed growing secretly in the soul, exposed to the weather of life. As with other of Vaughan's intuitions, the feeling for the growth of plants finds an established Biblical

precedent, by means of which it can be absorbed into his imaginative response to religious experience. He finds in the Psalms that the secret growth of herbs is evoked as a mark of God's care for his creatures. Psalm 65, verse 10, tells how God prepares the land:-

Thou waterest the ridges thereof abundantly: thou settlest the furrows thereof: thou makest it soft with showers: thou blessest the springing thereof.

Vaughan composed a version of this Psalm, the additional details of which reveal where his imaginative sympathies lay:-

Thou water'st every ridge of land
And settlest with thy secret hand
The furrows of it; then thy warm
And opening showers (restrain'd from harm)
Softens the mould, while all unseen
The blade grows up alive and green.
(p. 532)

But there was another symbolic meaning for the growth of the plant, which Vaughan was to make one of the central images of his poetry. 'The seed growing secretly' has at its head a reference to its Biblical source: Mark 4. 26. The verse reads:-

And he said, So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground.

Vaughan's poem on this text contains the following stanzas:-

Slowly and sadly doth he grow,
And soon as left, shrinks back to ill;
O feed that life, which makes him blow
And spread and open to thy will!

For thy eternal, living wells
None stain'd or wither'd shall come near:
A fresh, immortal green there dwells,
And spotless white is all the wear.

Dear, secret Greenness! nurst below

Tempests and windes, and winter-nights,
 Vex not, that but one sees thee grow,
 That One made all these lesser lights.
 (p. 511)

R.A. Durr comments on the significance of this image which appears in many of the poems:-

In the symbolism of vegetative growth, the origin, essence, and motive force of spiritual evolution - of the growth of the Lily - is the Divine seed, however wilted the plant may appear. And as God's refining action may restore the gold's original brilliance, so may His gospel word, his "dew", revive the withered plant.⁴⁵

This reading of Vaughan's poems within the context of Christian symbolism helps one to feel the full value of the rain which revives the soul in 'The Showre'. There is, however, another strand woven into the texture of Vaughan's imagination, which also has a bearing on his use of this particular kind of imagery. E.C. Pettet warns:-

If we know nothing of hermeticism, we shall sometimes miss certain overtones of Vaughan's language. For instance, the words 'green' and 'greenness', which he was so fond of, not only indicate his peculiar sensitivity to growing things: they also refer to that benedicta viriditas that was for the alchemists the essence - and wonder - of the vegetable world.⁴⁶

With these complex origins in mind - intuitive, Biblical, and Hermetic - we can turn to see how Vaughan used this natural imagery in his poems. The three stanzas quoted above will serve to show that the details are being employed in a different way from those considered so far. In many of the poems, nature teaches man by contrast: it praises and serves and watches, while man is disobedient and neglectful. In others, like 'The Water-fall', 'The Bird', and 'The Showre', the natural details become symbols for aspects of the poet's

religious experience, but they remain apart from that experience, functioning as parallels. It is noteworthy that each of the poems begins with an address to them, as separate beings, thus establishing an observer-observed relationship. In 'The seed growing secretly', the "he" referred to is the seed within Vaughan himself. The "Tempests and windes, and winter-nights" - symbols which we have seen used more objectively in 'The Timber' and 'The Bird' - have now become part of the landscape of the poet's soul. We will see this shift from emblematic to metaphoric use of natural details more clearly if we examine Vaughan's greatest achievement in this mode, 'Unprofitableness' (p. 441). Instead of progressing from the contemplation of a natural phenomenon to some general or personal aspects of spiritual life, Vaughan here expresses his state of soul in terms of the phenomenon itself.⁴⁷ In 'The Timber' and 'The Bird' his intuition of the life of those creatures is intensified and directed by his own religious experience; in 'Unprofitableness' his religious experience is imagined in the terms of his intuitions about the life of a plant.

A further ingredient must now be added to the complicated sources of Vaughan's inspiration: literary reminiscence - in this case, as so often in Vaughan, the poetry of George Herbert. The initial impulse behind 'Unprofitableness' was obviously Herbert's 'The Flower'.⁴⁸ Many of Vaughan's favourite natural symbols occur in this poem: the inner weather of frosts and storms; the secret growth of grace in the soul, likened to the awakening of a plant beneath the soil; the sense of the creation striving towards God; the shower or

dew of grace. But the treatment of the central image is of a different order of intensity. Herbert does not completely bridge the gap between the flower and himself. The element of formal comparison is strong - "as the flowers in spring", "like snow in May", "as flowers depart". Even when he does adopt the persona of the flower, the distance is still maintained in such a phrase as "relish versing", which relates to only one side of the comparison. The method of Vaughan's poem is closer to that of Marvell's 'The Coronet' than to Herbert. Every nuance of thought and feeling is expressed in terms of the metaphor, from the "bleak leaves" to the "one poor leaf" that was never contributed to God's wreath, just as Marvell's "fruit are only flowers", which Christ must finally crush, together with the twining and speckled serpent. But even the term "metaphor" does not seem adequate to describe the subtle use which Vaughan is making of his natural details here. One of Vaughan's most sensitive critics has some illuminating remarks on his poetic method:-

Mais en des poèmes tels que Unprofitableness ou Disorder and Frailty, lorsqu'il se compare à la plante flétrie qui revit comme à la vapeur qui s'exhale et retombe, il cherche moins à s'analyser qu'à proposer à son imagination et à la nôtre un objet dont elle se puisse émouvoir. De métaphore l'image devient tableau. L'émotion qu'elle éveille s'ajoute, un instant même se substitue, au sentiment dont elle est seulement la "figure".⁴⁹

The other poem which Ellrodt mentions, 'Disorder and Frailty', contains lines which also owe an obvious debt to Herbert's 'The Flower':-

But while I grow
And stretch to thee, ayming at all
Thy stars, and spangled hall,
Each fly doth tast,
Poyson, and blast

My yielding leaves; sometimes a shower
 Beats them quite off, and in an hour
 Not one poor shoot
 But the bare root
 Hid under ground survives the fall.
 Alas, frail weed!
 (p. 445)

Once more the identification is more complete - "De métaphore l'image devient tableau" - and Vaughan adds several touches which sign the work as his. Where Herbert's flower had striven towards "heaven", Vaughan's aims at "Thy stars, and spangled hall". For the reference to what is beyond the world of natural objects, Vaughan has substituted for the abstract "heaven" his beloved symbol of the shining night skies, thus maintaining the concreteness of his poem, and confirming yet again that his religious imagination is enriched by his sensitivity to the outward beauties of the Creation.

He also adds a characteristic detail to Herbert's account of the withering of the plant: by explaining that it has been tainted by a "fly", he sets his image more firmly in the context of nature's processes. For Herbert, it was sufficient that the flower "shrivel'd"; Vaughan, letting his imagination respond more fully to the image itself, feels his way further into its life.

This metaphoric fusion of his own spiritual life with that of plants is so integral a part of Vaughan's poetic idiom and sensibility, that it is likely to turn up quite naturally in the course of a poem which is not using the metaphor as its basic means of development. To express his sense of participation in the harmonious dawn chorus in 'The Morning-watch', he spontaneously calls up the image:-

at last the object of his quest comes to find him instead. The method which Vaughan employs in this poem is that of allegory, and the figures which he chooses to embody various spiritual and psychological experiences are details from nature.⁵⁰ The opening stanzas, which describe his sinful complacency, and his awakening from it, make use of the familiar imagery of plants, storms, and an inner landscape:-

It was high-spring, and all the way
Primros'd, and hung with shade;
 Yet, was it frost within,
 And surly winds
 Blasted my infant buds, and sinne
 Like Clouds ecclips'd my mind.

He soon perceives that his spring is "Meere stage, and show", and begins to climb laboriously upwards. At the top of the slope he finds an enigmatic pair of scales, passes thence to "a faire, fresh field", known as "Jacob's Bed", and comes next to a "stately grove". Inside the grove an amazing transformation takes place: "all was chang'd, and a new spring/did all my senses greet". The significance of this "new spring", which replaces the deceptively attractive spring of stanza 2, is not made as explicit as the description of the first two stanzas, where "sinne" and "griefe" are identified as part of the inner landscape. But the sheer delight felt in the poetry helps the reader to gauge the mood of the experience being allegorized:-

The unthrift Sunne shot vitall gold
 A thousand peeces,
 And heaven its azure did unfold
 Checcur'd with snowie fleeces.

The reference to "all my senses" appears to be important:⁵¹ there is

"spice" in the air; the eyes are "fed"; and the ear waits for "some use", which comes with the perception of a fountain containing "divers stones, some bright, and round/Others ill-shap'd, and dull", symbolizing healthy and corrupt souls. In turning from these wonders, led by the sense of hearing, he becomes aware of the sobering fact that some souls are excluded from the pleasures of the scene because of sin:-

The first (pray marke,) as quick as light
Danc'd through the floud,
But th'last more heavy then the night
sail'd to the Center stood.

The traditional light-night antithesis makes the meaning clear. The poet becomes "tyr'd/At last with thought", and his "restless eye that still desir'd" leads him to another sight, which restates the same truth: some sleep fast on the flowry bank of life, ignorant of what they are missing and what they are storing up for themselves; others are awake to the beauty of God and his creation - "broad-eyed/And taking in the Ray". The poem ends with the approach of that spirit which he has been seeking without knowing what it was. It comes upon him as "a rushing wind". He turns round, like Marvell in Upon Appleton House,⁵² "To see, if any leafe had made/Least motion, or Reply", and hears the spirit/wind whisper: "Where I please".

It may not be too fanciful to suggest that the experience embodied in this poem is similar to that described in Wordsworth's 'Lines composed a few miles above Tintern Abbey'.⁵³ Wordsworth, like Vaughan, progressed from an experience of the "colours" and "forms" of external

nature which "were then to me/An appetite" (compare Vaughan's "restless Eye that still desir'd"); to the chastening and subduing awareness of "The still, sad music of humanity" (paralleled by Vaughan's recognition of the unhappy souls who remain "fast asleepe"); to the "sense sublime/Of something far more deeply interfused" (Vaughan's "rushing wind"). There are obvious differences between the two poets: Vaughan's feeling for other men is strictly within the terms of Christian dogma, whereas Wordsworth's is a much more general sympathy; Vaughan's apprehension of the presence of God is conditioned by what he already knows about God from other sources: he feels the breath of God, the Holy Spirit, who, like the wind, bloweth where it listeth, whereas Wordsworth is surprized by a presence which he has no name for, and falls into the pantheistic heresy of believing God to be also "in the mind of man". But it could be argued that the experience related in the two poems is of the same psychological order. Vaughan, like Wordsworth, retired to the peace of the country after the collapse of political and moral ideals, and there underwent a complete change of heart as to the significance of life.⁵⁴ Both poets found God in the natural world around them, and discovered in nature symbols for all that was most important to them. Differences of emphasis and dogma there inevitably are, because of the different cultural eras in which they lived and wrote; but the points of contact are remarkable. As we have seen in a previous comparison of the two poets, natural objects were for Wordsworth the cause of experience, while for Vaughan they fulfilled the less fundamental function of

aids to meditation and expression. But we should not forget Ellrodt's reminder that the natural detail did not merely provide Vaughan with "l'illustration d'une vérité religieuse".⁵⁵ It is too much to say that without his interest in nature there would have been no religious experience, but it seems likely that without it that experience would have been of a different and a poorer quality.

The figure of the Quest turns up in many of Vaughan's other poems, but never is its course so completely mapped in terms of natural imagery as in 'Regeneration'. The poem entitled 'The Search' (pp. 405-7) uses natural symbols as points of reference, but it mainly employs biblical material. It begins with dawn imagery:-

'Tis now cleare day: I see a Rose
 Bud in the bright East, and disclose
 The Pilgrim-Sunne; all night have I
 Spent in a roving Extasie
 To find my Saviour.

The quest then takes the poet from Bethlehem, to Egypt, to Jerusalem, to Calvary. Still unsuccessful, he determines to seek in the wilderness, but at that moment the sun rises: ". . . see, It is day,/The Sun's broke through to guide my way". Hereupon, he hears a voice singing, which tells him that his search will never be rewarded in this mortal scheme of things:-

Search well another world; who studies this,
 Travels in Clouds, seeks Manna, where none is.

As in 'The Water-fall' the point is made that God is essentially beyond his Creation. In the world there are only glimpsed "shadows of eternity".

The unnamed poem beginning "Joy of my life!" also makes extensive use of the imagery of the pilgrimage, with natural phenomena acting, like the sun in 'The Search', as guides:-

Stars are of mighty use: The night
 Is dark, and long;
 The Road foul, and where one goes right,
 Six may go wrong.
 One twinkling ray
 Shot o'r some cloud,
 May clear much way
 And guide a croud.
 (p. 423)

The stars, which Vaughan loved so much, are felt to be the saints of God, calling the wandering soul home to the Holy City, of which they are also the distant lights:-

God's Saints are shining lights: who stays
 Here long must passe
 O're dark hills, swift streames, and steep ways
 As smooth as glasse;
 They are (indeed) our Pillar-fires
 Seen as we go,
 They are that Cities shining spires
 We travell too.
 (p. 423)

11. The Beholder of Nature.

Similar thoughts were to occur to Gerard Manley Hopkins as he scanned the heavens in 'The Starlight Night', though the half-conceited glance at the Biblical "Pillar-fires" was alien to his more Romantic vision:-

Look at the stars! look, look up at the skies!
 O look at all the fire-folk sitting in the air!
 The bright boroughs, the circle-citadels there!
 . . . This piece-bright paling shuts the spouse
 Christ home, Christ and his mother and all the hallows. 56

The opening lines from 'The Search' quoted above foreshadow another of Hopkins's splendid images, in 'Hurrahing in Harvest':-

I walk, I lift up, I lift up heart, eyes,
Down all that glory in the heavens to glean our Saviour.⁵⁷

The same poem contains a line which is applicable to Vaughan as justly as to the later poet: "These things, these things were here and but the beholder/santing". Other poets of the seventeenth century responded to the beauties of nature; and other poets wrote great religious verse; but no poet - perhaps until Hopkins himself - combined so intensely the love of nature with a deep faith in established religious doctrine. Others of his contemporaries looked and learned, but only Vaughan was a true "beholder" in Hopkins's sense. As Helen C. White has written, he was "quite unlike most of his contemporaries even among the religious poets in appreciating the perceptive value of wonder".⁵⁸ She admits that "there is always Sir Thomas Browne" - and she might have added, there is George Daniel; but for all his personal responsiveness to the miracles of the Creation, the Yorkshire poet remains more Horatian and philosophic than the Christian and almost mystical Vaughan.

When all this has been said, it must be acknowledged that it would be mistaken to call Vaughan a "nature poet" in anything like the sense in which it can be applied to later poets. One can gather from his poetry no clear picture of any particular stretch of country, nor indeed of many actual details from nature. He does sometimes introduce a touch of precise observation, as in the lovely simile

from the elegy "They are all gone into the world of light".:-

It glows and glitters in my cloudy brest
 Like stars upon some gloomy grove,
 Or those faint beams in which this hill is drest,
 After the Sun's remove.

(p. 484)

But usually he is more intent on reproducing an emotional or spiritual experience through his evocations of natural phenomena, than on painting an accurate picture. One last quotation will illustrate this ability to maintain a sense of actuality and to charge a natural scene with intense feeling, without really presenting a clear visual impression. The lines are from 'The Dawning':-

All now are stirring, ev'ry field
 Ful hymns doth yield,
 The whole Creation shakes off night,
 And for thy shadow looks the light,
 Stars now vanish without number,
 Sleepie Planets set, and slumber,
 The pursie Clouds disband, and scatter,
 All expect some sudden matter,
 Not one beam triumphs, but from far
 That morning-star.

(p. 452)

The most powerful words here are not those which suggest pictorial details, but those which create a sense of the whole Creation as a vast living force, rousing itself from rest: "stirring", "shakes off", "disband", "expect"; and those which imagine the night skies as wearily seeking repose: "sleepie", "slumber". And, as has been seen so often in Vaughan's poetry, the account of the natural phenomenon would be flat and meaningless (as it is in the early secular poems) if it were not governed by an urgency outside itself. Vaughan is not simply describing the dawn, he is describing the dawn as an archetype of the last great dawning when Christ returns to the earth,

and finally scatters the clouds of sin. It is the expectation of this event that lends emotional excitement to the contemplation of the lightening sky.

12. Conclusion.

The world of Vaughan's imagination is not quite the world of nature in which we live, nor indeed the particular Brecon countryside in which he spent so much of his life. Many of the things he must have seen daily - the mountains, for example - find no place in his poetry. He never particularizes the flowers which he seems to know so intimately. For the nature that we meet in Silex Scintillans is in many ways a special and personal nature, concocted from the various sources that went to form the substance of his imaginative powers.⁵⁹ It is in some ways a simpler nature than the real thing: there is no hint of that "Nature red in tooth and claw" that moved a later poet. All its forces are tamed, obedient to the will of its Maker, except insofar as they can be used as images to express the dark side of the soul of man. Only then are the tempests allowed to rage. Poem after poem resounds with the "great Chime/And Symphony" of a nature redeemed and at one with its Creator.

NOTES

1. See Chapter III of F.E. Hutchinson's Henry Vaughan: A Life and Interpretation (Oxford, 1947), pp. 30-47.
2. Hutchinson discusses the evidence for Vaughan's active involvement in the fighting, *ibid.*, Chapter V, pp. 55-71.
3. Although Thalia Rediviva was published in 1678, more than twenty years after the second edition of Silex Scintillans, it contains mostly early work which had not been used for the volumes of the 1640s and 1650s. See Hutchinson, *ibid.*, p. 217.
4. Various reasons have been suggested for the "conversion" of Henry Vaughan: the unexpected death of his youngest brother, William, in July 1648; a serious and prolonged illness; the death of his wife while he was working on the second part of Silex Scintillans, and her influence on him before she died; a careful study of the Bible; a reading of George Herbert's works, "whose holy life and verse", wrote Vaughan in the preface to the second edition of Silex Scintillans, "gained many pious Converts, (of whom I am the least)". Hutchinson sums up the evidence, pp. 99-108. A dissenting voice is raised by Frank Kermode, who suggests that "the conversion was rather a poetic than a religious experience". See his article "The Private Imagery of Henry Vaughan", Review of English Studies, n.s.I, No.3 (1950), p. 206.
5. The Works of Henry Vaughan, ed. L.C. Martin, 2nd. ed. (Oxford 1957), p. 15. All references to Vaughan's work are to this edition, and most page references will be included in the text.
6. Another example occurs in 'To my Ingenuous Friend, R.W.' (pp. 3-4), in which the souls of the two friends are imagined journeying to the "Elysian fields", "the drowsie fields of Lethe", and the "flowry banks" of a fanciful realm beyond death.
7. Hutchinson discusses the dating of this poem, pp. 220-1.
8. Hutchinson notes that this may be a reference to an oak tree that grew near the Vaughans' house, p. 20.
9. Cf. the couplet from A Midsummer-Night's Dream, Act V, Sc. (i), ll. 21-22: Or in the night, imagining some fear,
How easy is a bush supposed a bear!
10. We have seen similar attempts to compose a scene in this way in the work of Milton and Eldred Revett. See above, Chapter VII, Section 3, and Chapter IV, Section 7.
11. Cf. The Duchess of Newcastle's sympathy for the condition of an aged tree in 'Of an Oake in a Grove', discussed above in Chapter IV, Section 6.
12. See Keats's sonnet beginning "After dark vapors have oppress'd our plains".
13. See also the translation, 'Ausonii Cupido, Edyl. 6' (p. 73):-
A Scene of pensive flowres, whose bosomes wear
Drops of a Lover's bloud, the Emblem'd truths
Of deep despair, and Love-slain Kings and Youths.

14. Hutchinson, p. 84.

15. Metrum 3 begins:-

When the Sun from his Rosie bed
The dawning light begins to shed,
The drowsie sky uncurtains round,
And the (but now bright) stars all drown'd
In one great light, look dull and tame,
And homage his victorious flame.

(p. 81)

'The Dawning' contains very similar images:-

Stars now vanish without number,
Sleepie Planets set, and slumber.

(p. 452)

The later poem is discussed in Section 11 of this chapter.

16. Cf. 'Corruption' (p. 440); 'Man' (p. 477); and "And do they so?" (pp. 432-3).

17. These lines are from 'The Praise of a Religious Life' (p. 90).

Cf. the similar idea in the translation of Casimire's Lib. 3. Ode 22:-

Happy the Man! who in this vale
Redeems his time, shutting out all
Thoughts of the world, whose longing Eyes
Are ever Pilgrims in the skyes,
That views his bright home, and desires
To shine amongst those glorious fires.

(p. 87)

18. See especially Section 3, Section 5, and Section 9, which deal with the Cambridge Platonist's defence against Cartesian dualism and Hobbesian materialism.

19. Eric La Guardia, Nature Redeemed (The Hague, 1966), p. 16.

20. See above, Chapter II, Section 10 for an account of the prose writers, and Chapter VI, Section 6 for an account of the poets, who approach nature looking for such evidence.

21. See Chapter IX, Section 3 above.

22. Helen C. White, The Metaphysical Poets (1936, Collier Books ed., New York, 1962), pp. 264-5. For another account of this quality in Vaughan see M.M. Mahood, "Vaughan: The Symphony of Nature", Poetry and Humanism (London, 1950):-

"Pantheism was one extreme result of the Renaissance humanism which produced as its opposite distortion the Cartesian dualism inherent in much seventeenth-century thought. Vaughan's vivid awareness of the physical world's intersection with the spiritual world makes nonsense of this dualism; and Thomas Vaughan also seeks to refute it. In this, as in other matters, Thomas Vaughan speaks from speculation, Henry Vaughan from experience." (p. 289)

23. S.L. Bethell, The Cultural Revolution of the Seventeenth Century (London, 1951), pp. 158-9.

24. Cf. the group of dawn poems written by such poets as George Daniel and Joseph Beaumont (discussed in Chapter IX, Section 4 above). Cf. also the dawn imagery of Milton's 'Ode on the Morning of Christ's Nativity' (discussed in Chapter VII, Section 2 above).
25. See above, Chapter IV, Section 5, and Appendix C.
26. See for example Psalm 68, v. 8:- "The earth shook, the heavens also dropped at the presence of God"; Psalm 96, v. 12:- "Let the field be joyful, and all that is therein: then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice"; Psalm 98, vv. 7-8:- "Let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein. Let the floods clap their hands: let the hills be joyful together".
27. See, for example, 'Employment (II)', The Works of George Herbert, ed. F.E. Hutchinson (Oxford, 1945), pp. 78-9:- "Oh that I were an Orange-tree,/That busie plant!"
28. George Daniel scorns the limited, but arrogant, power of human reason, but his attitude is more philosophical than Vaughan's more intuitive rejection of reason. See above, Chapter IX, Section 3.
29. Vaughan is close to Mildmay Fane and other emblematical poets here. Cf. Fane's "When we behold the Morning Dew/Dissolve ith'-rising Sun: What would it shew?" and "I am taught Thankfulness from trees". Both these remarks are discussed in Chapter VI, Section 6 above.
30. Poetry and Prose of William Blake, ed. Geoffrey Keynes ("The Nonesuch Library"), 4th ed. (London, 1939), p. 118.
31. Louis L. Martz discusses this poem as an example of the process of self-analysis derived from the meditational practices of St. Bonaventure. The ultimate goal of such a quest is to discover the Image of God within the human creature, and the first two stages consist in the effort to find God "mirrored in the external world". See The Poetry of Meditation, revised ed. (New Haven and London, 1962), pp. 150-2.
32. M.M. Mahood, op. cit., p. 289.
33. The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth, ed. E. de Selincourt, 5 vols., 2nd ed. (Oxford, 1952), II, 212-3.
34. M.M. Mahood, op. cit., p. 288. See also S.L. Bethell:- "For wordsworth the reality was nature, and one felt there was something behind it; for Vaughan the reality was God and the eternal order: temporal beings were significant only because they bore the 'signatures' of their eternal antitypes, because they were God's book. Wordsworth had only his feelings to go on, . . . but Vaughan's intuition had the support of clear and contemporary doctrine". (op. cit., p. 148).
35. M.M. Mahood noticed this feature of Vaughan's verse:- "He is alone among the poets of the time in repeatedly suggesting the hour and place of his lyrics' composition". (op. cit., p. 261).

36. He expresses this delight in movement in 'Affliction':-

Were all the year one constant Sun-shine, wee
Should have no flowres,
All would be drought, and leanness; not a tree
Would make us bowres;
Beauty consists in colours; and that's best
Which is not fixt, but flies, and flowes.
(p. 460)

One can see evidence of this sensitivity to the changing features of nature in Vaughan's fascination with light, and his predilection for shifting tones of sunset or dawn, or the twinkling lights of stars, or the glinting surface of flowing water.

37. Helen C. White, op. cit., p. 284.

38. Robert Herrick had a similar sense of the common processes which were at work in human and plant or animal life, though he expressed his intuitions in secular rather than religious terms. See above Chapter VIII, Section 4.

39. Cf. Daniel's Ode XXIII, and the discussion of devotional poems occasioned by the dawn chorus, in Chapter IX, Section 4 above. See also another of Vaughan's contributions to this line of poetry, 'The Bee' (p. 673):-

"Birds from the shades of night releast
Look round about, then quit the neast,
And with united gladness sing
The glory of the morning's King".

40. Cf. Herbert and his followers, discussed in Chapter V, Section 4a above; and Daniel's Ode A, discussed in Chapter IX, Section 5 above.

41. Elizabeth Holmes, Henry Vaughan and the Hermetic Philosophy (Oxford, 1932), p. 40.

42. See The Poetical Works of John Keats, ed. H. Buxton Forman (London, 1908), p. 235 and p. 212.

43. Alvarez comments on the opening stanzas of 'The Timber':-

"It is the writing that is by no means conventional; instead it is almost disproportionately powerful and detailed. This is not because Vaughan has somehow entered into the nature of the timbering which creaks at the approach of bad weather. It is, instead, because he is expressing, with extraordinary inwardness, his own sense of sin. Not that the timber is a persona for his own sharp feelings; rather, he creates his feelings in terms of his subject." (The School of Donne (London, 1961), p. 87).

44. See R.A. Durr, On the Mystical Poetry of Henry Vaughan (Cambridge, Mass., 1962), pp. 29-30).

45. *ibid.*, p. 38.

46. E.C. Pettet, Of Paradise and Light: A Study of Vaughan's Silex Scintillans (Cambridge, 1960), pp. 72-3.

47. Ross Garner sees this poem as "without peer an expression of the immediacy of God in His creation, the experience of the order of grace embodied in the order of nature". (Henry Vaughan:

- Experience and the Tradition (Chicago, 1959), p. 126.
48. Herbert's Works, ed. cit., pp. 165-7.
 49. Robert Ellrodt, Les Poètes Métaphysiques Anglais, 2 vols. (Paris, 1960), II, 189.
 50. For the tradition of poems to which this belongs see above, Chapter V, Section 4d.
 51. Cf. other scenes in enchanted groves, which also involve an experience of the senses: Lovelace's 'Aramantha', discussed in Chapter VI, Section 2 above; Milton's 'Il Penseroso', discussed in Chapter VII, Section 3 above; and Marvell's 'The Garden' and Upon Appleton House, discussed below in Chapter XII, Sections 8 and 9.
 52. See Upon Appleton House, stanzas LXXII-LXXIII:-
 "No Leaf does tremble in the Wind
 Which I returning cannot find.
 Out of these scatter'd Sibyls Leaves
 Strange Prophecies my Phancy weaves."
 53. Wordsworth's Poetical Works, ed. cit., II, 259-263.
 54. Hutchinson remarks:- "Nature had for him a 'healing power' as it had for Wordsworth when recovering from the aridity that seized him after the acute disappointment of his political hopes". (op. cit., p. 167). Ruth Wallerstein looks more closely at the psychological processes involved:- "A man who has been like Marvell or like Vaughan through wearisome sciolism and through civil conflict which has destroyed or seemed to destroy the institutions to which his deepest loyalties are attached and who has through great effort transcended those barriers of disintegration and self-consciousness in a reintegration of feeling and thought, often experiences the objects of nature with a new and special sensitiveness and in a singularly intimate relation to the energy of his own mind. It is in such a vision more their form and the energy of life in them that he sees than what we should ordinarily call their sensuous detail. As Mr. Martin says, it is this experience rather than any specific literary influence which binds Wordsworth and Vaughan together." (Studies in Seventeenth-Century Poetic (Madison and Milwaukee, 1965), p. 254).
 - 55.= Robert Ellrodt, op. cit., II, 211.
 56. The Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins, ed. W.H. Gardner and M.H. Mackenzie, 4th. ed. (London, 1967), pp. 66-67. Gardner notes the similarity between the images of Vaughan and Hopkins in these poems, in Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844-1889), 2 vols., (London, 1949, reissued 1958), II, 236.
 57. Hopkins, poems, ed. cit., p. 70.
 58. Helen C. White, op. cit., p. 281.
 59. M.M. Mahood comments:- "So Vaughan's immediate delight in a beautiful countryside blends, in his poetry, with his recollections of native and English verse, of the Bible, of Jesuit emblemata and of both ancient and modern Hermetists". (op. cit.,

p. 261). E.C. Pettet speaks of Vaughan's "private 'world' of imagination", made up above all of contrasts:- "the eternal, primal alternation of day and night, the wonder of daybreak, the mystery and terror of night, with all their rich similars, analogies, and extensions - light and darkness, consciousness and sleep, election and sin, life and death . . . the perpetual, strange contrast of the near and the far, of the earthly and the otherwordly - primroses and Welsh streams with Scriptural palm-trees and wells, the Brecon landscape with the garden of The Song of Songs, the lamps, beds, and cottages of familiar, everyday experience with memories of the 'bright days of Eden' and visions of the 'fresh spicy mornings and eternal beams' of heaven." (op. cit., pp. 8-10).

Chapter XI

Edward Benlowes

Edward Benlowes¹ was born in 1602, the heir to the estates of a recusant family in Essex. He was brought up as a landed gentleman should be: St. John's College, Cambridge, 1620; Lincoln's Inn, 1622; the Grand Tour - rather grander than most, taking in Holland, Germany, Austria, Hungary, Italy, and France - 1627-1630. He then settled into his country estate to live a life of elegance and ease. By this time, he had become an ardent Protestant, and had developed a keen interest in the fine arts and literature. He was very generous with his wealth, and became known as Benevolus. Much of his energy was devoted to sponsoring the writing and publication of other men's works: he was responsible for the printing of Phineas Fletcher's The Purple Island, and encouraged Francis Quarles to compose the famous Emblems: Divine and Moral.² When the Civil War broke out, he was a passive supporter of the King, but even in inaction could not escape the financial persecution of Parliament. He found relief from the troubles of the time in the task of composing, and minutely supervising the lavish printing of Theophila, his only extensive poetic work. In the course of time the political fines, his liberal patronage of other poets, and his own mismanagement of his affairs, led him into financial difficulties, and he was forced to sell the family estates. His latter years were passed in poverty in Oxford, where he died in 1676.

His life-story is a parable of the social revolution that was

taking place in the seventeenth century. He was a representative of a dying class: the landed gentlemen who took both the privileges and the obligations of their position seriously, as part of the system of things ordained by God. In almost every respect he was behind the times. He inherited his wealth and position in a time of self-made men; he was a Royalist when the progressive party were the Parliamentarians; his world-picture was virtually untouched by the new developments in scientific thought that were happening in his life-time; in poetry and art his tastes were those of the metaphysical generation, delighting in the fantastic. When he wrote Theophila (c. 1645-1650) it was, in many respects, already out of date. Christopher Hill³ has argued that Benlowes was a man who belonged to a doomed way of life and thought, and practised a dead tradition of poetry. This assessment, however, is not entirely just. Benlowes's conceited, metaphysical style may have been a little old-fashioned,⁴ but his exploration of the theme of retirement and his interest in the countryside as a setting for contemplation place him in the ranks of those who were opening up new areas of poetic experience in the middle decades of the seventeenth century. Maren-Sofie Røstvig suggests that both Paradise Lost and Upon Appleton House may reflect the influence of Theophila, and claims that the last two cantos especially may be enjoyed on their own merits, "and not merely as an interesting fossil dating from a previous era".⁵

1. Nature: Scientific and Emblematic.

Benlowes's early education - in a cloistered Catholic home, and

at Cambridge - did little to bring him into contact with the ideas and discoveries that were changing the face of science and philosophy, and his own intellectual gifts and inclinations did not lead him to take any interest in that area of knowledge. His biographer, Harold Jenkins, has written:-

Few men at Cambridge in the 1620's showed any sign of having heard of Bacon. And there was little awareness of the new world which had been opened up by the Copernican astronomy and the geographical discoveries of the Elizabethan voyagers. Benlowes himself never showed much acquaintance with the "new Philosophy" which called "all in doubt". He was not given to looking forward, and his docile intellect, easily inveigled into metaphysical speculations and captivated by the minutiae of scholarship, was probably well suited to its Cambridge environment.⁶

Later, discussing Benlowes's reading, Jenkins remarks:-

It may be said at once that he took little interest in the new science which was in the course of the century to revolutionize man's conception of the world he lived in. . . . In fact, he illustrates the familiar seventeenth-century survival of mediaeval attitudes in the midst of a scientific revolution.⁷

One passage from Theophila reveals clearly Benlowes's philosophical attitude to the world of created things. Quailing before the task of describing the wonders of Heaven, he muses on man's inability to understand even his own earthly environment:-

Since Time began,
What constitutes a gnat was ne'er found out by man.
(Canto V, stanza xiv)⁸

He goes on to give a formidable list of problems which man could never solve:-

In like degrees from equinoctial track,
Why men are tawny, white, and black?
Why Bactria's camel two? Arab's one bunch on's back?
.....

Canst motion fix? count sands? recall past day?
 Show height, breadth, length o'th'spreading ray?
 Discardinate the spheres? and rapid whirlwinds stay?

Tell, tell how pond'rous Earth's huge propless ball
 Hangs poised in the fluent hall
 Of fleeting air? how clouds sustained are from fall?

How burnt the Bush, when verdure cloth'd its fire?
 How from the rock, rod-struck in ire,
 Did cataracts gush out? How did the sea retire?
 (Canto V, stanzas xvi, xviii-xx, p. 369)

His response to the mysterious phenomena of the universe, from the gnat to the spheres, is to stand gazing in wonder and amazement. He expresses no desire to understand the workings of nature. (Incidentally, it is indicative of the mediaeval bent of his mind that he makes no distinction between unexplained features of the physical universe, such as the properties of light, the suspension of a planet in space, the nature of clouds - some of which were to be explained scientifically within a few years - and the Biblical miracles of the burning bush and the parting of the waters before the Israelites. All, for him, are examples of the unfathomable works of God.) Both the limitations of the human mind and the incomprehensibility of nature are a glorious witness to the power and magnificence of the Creator. Man is kept humble, and inclined to worship, by the knowledge and acceptance of his own ignorance and finite perceptions. His position is very different from Cowley's, who, in the translation from the Georgics at the end of the essay 'Of Agriculture', was to declare that his "first desire" was that the Muse would:-

. . . open there to my mind's purged eye
 Those wonders which to Sense the Gods deny;

How in the Moon such change of shapes is found:
 The Moon, the changing Worlds eternal bound.
 What shakes the solid Earth, what strong disease
 Dares trouble the firm Centre's antient ease;
 What makes the Sea retreat, and what advance;

and who was an advocate of empirical science and the close and scientific study of nature.¹⁰

Benlowes, in sharp contrast, looks on nature with the eye of an emblematiser. He learns from it not the physical laws of existence, but the moral laws of human conduct. The creatures of the countryside are there to teach man by example. The spiders teach him to labour diligently:-

Arise; and rising, emulate the rare
 Industrious spinsters, who with fair
 Embroid'ries checker-work the chambers of the air.
 (Canto I, stanza lxiv, p. 339)

The plants teach him humility: the great by their fall:-

Oaks, that dare grapple with Heav'n's thunder, sink
 All shiver'd; (Canto I, stanza xlvii, p. 338)

the lowly by their quiet felicity:-

So fragrant vi'lets, blushing strawberries,
 Close-shrouded lurk from lofty eyes,
 The emblem of sweet bliss, which low and hidden lies.
 (Canto XII, stanza xxxvi, p. 448)

Various natural objects teach that outward show deceives the senses -

"Reason's eye within"¹¹ is the only reliable judge of worth:-

Thus peaches do rough stones in velvet tire;
 Thus rotten sticks mock starry fire;
 Thus quagmires with green emeralds crown their cheating mire.
 (Canto X, stanza xxix, p. 428)

The flowing stream reminds man of the pilgrim state of this life:-

By rushy-fringed banks with purling rill,
 Meand'ring underneath the hill:
 Thus, stream-like, glides our life to Death's broad ocean still.
 (Canto XII, stanza lxxviii, p. 450)

The larks teach him to rise early, and begin the day with worship:-

Shall larks with shrill-chirpt matins rouse from bed
 Of curtain'd night sol's orient head?
 And shall quick souls lie numb'd, as wrapt in sheets of lead?
 (Canto I, stanza lxii, p. 339)

This is the image used to such fine effect in devotional poems by Daniel, Vaughan, and Beaumont.¹² But although the lesson is the same, the image functions quite differently in Benlowes's verse. In the devotional lyric, the lark's early song is felt as a personal rebuke by the slothful poet: there is a sense of intimate relationship between nature which teaches, and man who learns. In the lines from Theophila, the birds' chorus prompts a generalized comment on man's duty. An impersonal moral lesson is imparted, rather than a personal moral experience.

The physical world is full not only of objects which instruct man morally and spiritually, but also of reminders of great events in the Bible. Using the familiar image of the Book of Nature, he tells us that we can read in it some of the major incidents of Jewish history:-

Thinking, which some deem idleness, to me
 It seems life's Heav'n on earth to be;
 By observation God is seen in all we see.

Our books are Heav'n above us, air and sea
 Around, earth under; Faith's our stay,
 And Grace our guide, the Word our light, and Christ our way.

Friend, view that rock, and think from rock's green Wound
 How thirst-expelling streams did bound:
 View streams, and think how Jordan did become dry ground.

View Seas, and think how waves, like walls of glass,
 Stood fix'd, while Hebrew troops did pass;
 But clos'd the Pharian host in one confused mass.

(Canto XII, stanzas lxxix-lxxxii, p.451)

The weakness of imaginative effort involved in these stanzas can be gauged if they are placed beside similar passages from other poets of the period. The idea that if we look attentively "God is seen in all we see" is the basis of George Daniel's Ode XXAVII, which begins: "Looke above, and see thy wonder;/Downward looke, and see it under".¹³ But whereas Benlowes merely states this as a fact, Daniel creates an impression of a thrilling experience of the manifold wonders of the world around him. Daniel achieves a much greater poetic intensity partly by the energy of his rhythms, and partly by introducing several particular details into his growing catalogue of marvels. Benlowes is satisfied with the flat "air and sea/Around, earth under". Air, sea, and earth are no more than ideas; Daniel's creatures which "flye" and "Creepe", his "old/Majesticke oke", his "smallest grasse" and "Dust, and Atomes" together make up a living experience of a universe vibrant with life and meaning. Similarly, Andrew Marvell's discovery of Biblical analogues in the countryside is far more vital than Benlowes's attempt to interpret natural details:-

For when the Sun the Grass hath vext,
 The tawny Mowers enter next;
 Who seem like Israalites to be,
 Walking on foot through a green Sea.
 To them the Grassy Deeps divide,
 And crowd a Lane to either Side.¹⁴

The connections between Benlowes's rocks, seas, and streams and their appearance in Biblical stories are entirely in the mind - they are associations of words and ideas; the physical reality behind the word is irrelevant to the impact of the poetry. Marvell's effects, on the other hand, depend very much on a set of concrete circumstances which are brought vividly before the reader. The Mowers, who are particularized as "tawny", perform their natural functions, cutting the long grass, and thus driving a path through it. This scene calls to mind the Old Testament story, and both terms of the image modify each other. Benlowes calls up a Biblical episode, but does nothing with it. He feels he has done enough simply by reminding us of it. Marvell allows two experiences - a real visual phenomenon and a literary/religious reminiscence - to react upon each other, and so gives us a new perspective on each of them and a glimpse of a third reality which includes them both.

2. Plagiarism.

Benlowes borrowed a great deal from other poets, and has been branded as a mere plagiarist by some critics.¹⁵ But Harold Jenkins, while admitting that Benlowes was a more frequent and precise borrower than some others of his time, defends the poet's purpose:-

According to the convention of the poets of the time, an admired phrase could always be taken over into the admirer's own composition. Benlowes drew heavily in this way from many published works and from friends who lent him their manuscript verses. Some passages of Theophila were rather like a patchwork quilt in which one might recognize in new surroundings a long familiar fabric . . . But Benlowes borrowed from his fellow-poets infinitely more than most. He copied not only more frequently but more exactly.¹⁶

The point that must be made is that Benlowes did not surreptitiously filch phrases and images from other writers and hope to pass them off as his own.¹⁷ Part of the pleasure in reading his poem was to be delight at his cleverness in accommodating the borrowed phrases to the new work. The whole tradition of Petrarchan love-poetry and the witty lyrics of the Cavaliers depended on the recurrence and brilliant manipulation of an established set of images and situations;¹⁸ Vaughan deliberately used ideas, titles, images and phrases from Herbert; Marvell took a great deal from previous writers, even from Benlowes himself. Benlowes takes the process a little further than other poets, and although he does not transmute second-hand material into the stuff of his own poetry as completely as Vaughan and Marvell, he does manage to establish a style and movement of his own which absorbs it quite successfully.

Jenkins comments on the natural images in Benlowes's work:-

Benlowes often borrowed from various authors descriptions of country landscapes which one would have expected a country gentleman to depict from his own observation.¹⁹

But, in the light of what has just been said about borrowing, it would really be rather surprising if he had filled his descriptive passages with freshly observed details from nature. Observation, and originality of detail, were not in the seventeenth century considered important ingredients of poetry. Jenkins himself provides an interesting explanation of Benlowes's lack of perceptive originality a few pages later:-

He was one of those secondary poets whose preoccupation was with words and figures rather than ideas. The excitement of language became a substitute for the excitement of experience. Once it had caught his fancy, a phrase would be cherished and used again and again.²⁰

The often fantastic patterns which Benlowes weaves out of other men's words and images usually seem to be an end in themselves. In contrast, Marvell, who had a similar delight in the fantastic, used grotesque juxtapositions and analogies as a means of exploring the nature of reality.

It is interesting to note that Benlowes turned to the minor poems of Milton as his main quarry for descriptive material when he came to write the later sections of Theophila. Milton's Poems came out in 1645, and by 1646 Benlowes had started work on his poem. There is little trace of Miltonic borrowings in the early cantos, but as Benlowes went on he took more and more from the greater poet. Harold Jenkins has collected the chief borrowings,²¹ and comments:-

By the time he came to the twelfth canto - where Theophila was developing a pastoral theme - Comus and "L'Allegro" were drawn on to an extent that suggests that he had his Milton almost off by heart. Prone as Benlowes was to take to his own use whatever he admired in the verse of others, only from Sylvester did he borrow more than from Milton. And Sylvester was, of course, a much more bulky author. In Milton's relatively slender volume almost every page provided Benlowes with treasure trove.²²

Another major source was the work of the Polish poet, Casimire Sarbiewski, whose Latin odes were so influential during the 1640s and 1650s. Professor Maren-Sofie R stvig has discovered so many, and so exact, borrowings from the English version of the Odes,²³ that she is

forced to wonder:-

Did he, perhaps, write the last two cantos as a free paraphrase of Casimire - throughout following the spirit of the latter's retirement poems, and occasionally embodying direct quotations?²⁴

Among others from whom Benlowes lifted material Jenkins mentions Sandys, Donne, Shakespeare, Randolph, Cleveland, Quarles, Fane, and Owen Feltham.²⁵

3. Emblematic and Descriptive Conceits.

Discussing the kind of material which seems to have attracted Benlowes in the work of other poets, Harold Jenkins concludes that "what Benlowes most looked for in poetry was ingenuity in metaphor".²⁶ This is another way of saying that his literary tastes had been moulded by the fashionable extravagance of the metaphysical style. Sometimes his figurative uses of natural details have the shocking vividness that comes from bringing together apparently remote areas of experience. In Canto II there is the grotesque and disturbing image, reminiscent of the effects of the Jacobean dramatists:-

Your beauty, rottenness skinn'd o'er, does show
Like to a dunghill, blanch'd with snow,
Your glorious nature's by embasing sin brought low.
(stanza xxi, p. 347)

And later in the same canto there is a strikingly unexpected comparison of the slothful soul to a snail:-

That soul has woe,
Whose drowsy march to Heav'n is slow,
As drawling snails, whose slime glues them to things below.
(stanza liii, p. 349)

Sometimes Benlowes produces a surprise by applying a well-known image

in an unconventional way. Vaughan, Cowley, and Marvell²⁷ all use the image of a meteor, which is an exhalation from the slime of the earth, blazes a shining track across the sky, and then vanishes. Each of them interprets the phenomenon as something unpleasant. Vaughan calls meteors "spurious flames", gives them their common name of "false fires", and describes how they "cheate your Eyes". He uses them as a symbol for "Sublanarie Lovers hearts/Ped on loose prophane desires". Cowley sees them as images of deception, which seem to "gild" the air, but are found to be merely "sordid Slime". Marvell contrasts these "giddy Rockets", which are exhaled from "the putrid Earth", to the Heaven-tried flames of Mary Fairfax. Benlowes goes against custom in employing the image as a simile for something praise-worthy:-

As vicious meteors, fram'd of earthly slime,
 By motion fir'd, like stars, do climb
 The woolly-curdled clouds, and there blaze out their time.

Streaming with burnish'd flames; yet those but ray
 To spend themselves, and light our way;
 And panting winds, to cool ours, not their own lungs, play.

So [when] enliven'd spirits ascend the skies,
 Wasting to make the simple wise,
 Who bears the torch, himself shades, lightens others' eyes.
 (Canto III, stanzas iii-v, p. 353)

These meteors are symbols of unselfishness - they "spend themselves, and light our way", like those selfless "enlighten'd spirits" who use up their resources for the benefit of others, "wasting to make the simple wise". Since these stanzas come immediately after a reference to the "high-flown trance" of Du Bartas, Benlowes probably

took as his starting-point for this conceit the images of inspiration as a flame and as a flight above common experience. Two of the distinctive features of the poet's style are evident in his handling of this comparison. The elaborate pursuit of a conceit through several lines and turns of wit is typical of the methods of the metaphysicals; and the forcing of an image towards the desired moral application, even when it appears to be inappropriate, - "vicious meteors" must be made to represent "enliven'd spirits" - is a procedure often followed by emblem-writers. The same readiness to discover moral significance in natural images lies behind the unexpected uses of the snow-covered dunghill and the "drawling snails" in the previous examples. Benlowes's turn of mind is fundamentally emblematic.²⁸

Both his love of ingenuity and his moral concerns inform the conceits which are among his favourite methods of description. In Canto IV there is a stanza descriptive of winter which derives from a passage in Sylvester's version of Du Bartas:-

Betimes, when keen-breath'd winds, with frosty cream,
Periwig bald trees, glaze tattling stream:
For May-games past, white-sheet peccavi is Winter's theme.
(stanza lxviii, p. 365)

As we have seen in an earlier chapter,²⁹ Benlowes picked up several of the images in these lines from the Devine Weekes:-

But, when the Winters keener breath began
To crystallize the Baltike Ocean,
To glaze the Lakes, and bridle-vp the Floods,
And perriwig with wooll the bald-pate Woods.

Benlowes makes a lively improvement on the simple "Lakes" of his original in the phrase "tattling stream", and adds another ingenious - though not so happy - touch with the "frosty cream", which he probably adapted from another source, Thomas Carew's 'The Spring', which describes how the frost "casts an icy cream/Upon the silver lake or crystal stream".³⁰ But the important change is the way in which he turns a pure description into a moral commentary. The white snow becomes a penitential garment, worn to atone for the wantonness of "May-games past". He has shaped Sylvester's descriptive conceit to fit his own method of emblematic conceit.

Benlowes picks up the image of the periwig of snow again in another description of winter which functions metaphorically. Meditating on "the winter solstice of my years", he appeals to his Maker:-

Then shine, dear Lord! when quivering Winter's dress
 Is iced with hoary trees;
 When all streams frozen are, but tears, through Love's excess;

 When periwig'd with snow's each bald-pate wood,
 Bound in ice-chains each struggling flood;
 When North Seas bridled are, pris'ning their scaly brood.

 Then let those freezing hours be thaw'd by pray'r!
 As wells in winter warmer are
 By circumsession of refrigerating air.

(Canto XIII, stanzas liii-lv, p. 458)

The relationship between the season of winter and the human condition which it represents is somewhat odd: at times Benlowes seems to be presenting an allegorical portrait of himself as winter, his white hairs being the "hoary trees" and all the natural fluids of the body,

except tears, being the frozen streams; at other times the picture of winter is developed for its own sake, and its allegorical implications become blurred - how, for example, does one interpret the imprisoning of the "scaly brood" in terms of Benlowes's old age? The idea of the "freezing hours" being "thaw'd by pray'r" is similar to many metaphoric statements in the poems of Herbert and the devotional poets.³¹ The passage is a kind of hybrid. It is as if the poet develops a favourite metaphor of the School of Herbert in the manner of a metaphysical follower of Du Bartas.

The descriptive method employed in both these winter scenes is the familiar one of transforming the objects of the natural world into artificial products of human ingenuity: thus the streams are glazed, snow becomes a periwig adorning the bald pates of the leafless trees, the rivers are bound by chains of ice.³² Some of Benlowes's most pleasing effects are obtained when he exploits this technique with sensuous extravagance. The account of the Creation in Canto II, for instance, contains the following stanza:-

Then new-born day He gilt with glittering sun
 (Contracted light); with changing Moon
 He night adorn'd, and hung up lamps, like spangled bullion.
 (stanza ix, p. 346)

There is something of the sensuous richness and strangeness of Marvell's "golden Lamps in a green Night" in these lines. In Canto VI there is an even more splendid and outrageous conceit in an apostrophe to the Virgin Mary:-

Who bor'st Him in thy womb, whose hands did stack
 The studded orbs with stars, and tack
 The glowing constellations to the Zodiac!
 (stanza xxvi, p. 377)

Benlowes is at his best when his naturally extravagant style is put to the service of such vast and inexpressible events as the Creation of the universe. The effortless and miraculous ease with which God fashioned the expanses of the sky is superbly evoked by the simple word "tack".

In the last two cantos of Theophila, which are built around ideas of retirement and country life, there are a number of extended passages of description of the sights and sounds of the earth. These give Benlowes ample opportunity to develop his descriptive style. In Canto XII he paints a picture of a spring morning:-

From Taurus when Sol's influence descends,
 And Earth with verdant robe befriends,
 And richer showers, than fell on Danae's lap, dispends;

When early Phosphor lights from eastern bed
 The grey-eyed morn, with blushes red;
 When opal colours prank the orient tulip's head:

Then walk we forth, where twinkling spangles shew,
 Entinselling like stars the dew,
 Where buds, like pearls, and where we leaves, like em'ralsds,
 view:

Birds by grovets in feather'd garments sing
 New ditties to the non-ag'd spring;
 Oh, how those traceless minstrels cheer up everything!

To hear quaint nightingales, the lutes o'th'wood,
 And turtle-doves, by their mates woo'd,
 And smelling violet sweets, how do these cheer the blood!

While teeming Earth flower'd satin wears, embost
 With trees, with bushes shagg'd, with most
 Clear riv'lets edg'd, by rocking winds each gently tost;

The branching standards of the chirping grove,
 With rustling boughs, and streams that move
 In murm'ring rage, seem Nature's consort, tun'd by Love.

We to their hoarse laments lend list'ning ears;
 And sympathize with them in tears,
 Sadly rememb'ring British Sion's acted fears!
 (stanzas xlix-lvi, p. 449)

The account of dawn in the second stanza derives from a conventional periphrasis,³³ but Benlowes fails to establish the full personification on which it depends, and so weakens its imaginative texture. "Grey-eyed morn" as a verbal image takes his fancy, but he makes no attempt to exploit its metaphoric or descriptive potentiality. The last line of the stanza, however, is remarkably vivid. The details are not in themselves original - Benlowes had already referred to the "opal-colour'd dawns" in Canto I, stanza lxvi; "orient" was a much-used word in similar contexts; and Milton was probably the source of the use of "prank" to describe flowers - but Benlowes compresses them into a tight, compelling line, and produces a brilliant visual image.

The description of the natural scene in the rest of the passage again relies on a well-established tradition. The decking of nature in human apparel was common from the Middle Ages onwards: the dew is like spangles and tinsel; the buds are like pearls; the leaves like emeralds; birds wear not plain feathers, but "feather'd garments"; the earth is dressed in satin; the robes of earth are "edg'd" with streams, as a dress is trimmed with lace, and "embost" with trees. The aural description is similar: the nightingales are "lutes o'th'

wood"; and the various sounds of trees, birds, and streams are "tun'd" like musical instruments, and form together "Nature's consort" - an image that Benlowes could have found in many of the devotional poets who celebrated the harmony of morning's praise to the Creator.³⁴

But although the details are thoroughly conventional, Benlowes contrives to enliven the scene by relating them to the human observer. The spangles of the third stanza "shew", and the human participants in the scene "lend list'ning ears"; the birds and flowers of the next two stanzas "cheer up everything" and "cheer the blood". In this way, the artificially described phenomena of nature combine to produce a sensuous "experience", instead of remaining a mere list of items. Another device for maintaining the life of the description as an actual scene of related objects and happenings is the insistence on movement and the interaction of various elements. The morning colours "prank the orient tulip's head"; the light is "entinselling" the dew; the doves are wooing their mates; the trees and streams are "gently tost" by the "rocking winds" - a phrase taken direct from 'Il Penseroso'; the streams "move".

A peculiar weakness of Benlowes is evident in the clumsy transition from this descriptive passage to the meditation on the Civil Wars which follows. There is no convincing reason given in the poetry why the sounds of nature should lead the poet to remember "British Sion's acted fears" and the bones scattered on the field of Edge-hill (stanza lix). The "chirping", "rustling", and "murm'ring",

which produce a "consort, tun'd by Love", do not obviously constitute "hoarse laments" which should bring tears of sympathy to the eyes of the human observer. Benlowes wishes at this point to refer to the troubles of his country, and he forces his material to provide him with a pretext, just as he elsewhere forces his emblems to mean what he wants them to mean.

4. Sweet Secess: Retirement and Regeneration.

The last two cantos of Theophila, XII and XIII, were not part of the original plan of the poem, but appear under the separate titles of "The Sweetness of Retirement" and "The Pleasure of Retirement". They belong to the movement which was gathering ground during the 1630s and 1640s, and which sprang from the fruitful union of pastoral and Horatian motifs with the Christian development of the Song of Songs.³⁵ Benlowes, with his meditative turn of mind, stresses more than once the mental and spiritual benefits to be derived from retirement from the affairs of the world. In Canto XII, he claims that solitude can bear fruit:-

Examples are best precepts. Sweet Secess,
The nurse to inbred Happiness,
How dost thou intellects with fuller knowledge bless!
(stanza xxviii, pp. 447-8)

And a few lines later, he states the theoretical basis for a philosophy of retirement:-

We rule our conquer'd selves; what need we more?
To gadding Sense we shut the door;
Rich in our mind alone. Who wants himself, is poor.
(stanza xxxviii, p. 448)

Benlowes begins Canto XII in a pastoral vein, with an escape

from the Civil Wars and the corruption of town and Church into the quiet innocence of the countryside:-

Thus go we, like the heroes of old Greece,
In quest of more than golden fleece,
Retreating to sweet shades, our shatter'd thoughts we piece.
(stanza xxi, p. 447)

He expresses the contrast between the wars of men and the peace of the country through a conceit that was current in several poems of the period:-

For fields of combat, fields of corn are here,
For trooping ranks, tree-ranks appear;
War steels the heart, but here we melt heart, eye, and ear.
(stanza xli, p. 448)

Fane, Waller, and Cleveland all made use of this comparison,³⁶ and Andrew Marvell took it up and elaborated it in Upon Appleton House, describing how "like a Guard on either side,/The Trees before their Lord divide"; how "Each Regiment in order grows,/That of the Tulip Pinke and Rose"; and how:-

The Mower now commands the Field;
In whose new Traverse seemeth wrought
A Camp of Battail newly fought;
Where, as the Meads with Hay, the Plain
Lyes quilted ore with Bodies slain.
(stanza liii)

One can see again, by comparing the treatment of the conceit by the two poets, how different were their powers of imagination. Marvell roots the idea of an analogy between nature and war in the very sights and activities of the countryside. To someone walking down an avenue of trees, they do seem to be parting like ranks of soldiers; the flowers can suggest soldiers on parade because they too are

ordered in straight lines and grouped according to colour and kind by the gardener; the hay falls in heaps before the scythes of the mowers as the troops fall before the arms of the foe. Marvell is vitally interested in both sides of his analogy. Benlowes limits it to a mere conceit, which is interesting only as a conceit, as an idea. It works at a verbal, not a visual, experiential level. The connection between "fields of combat" and "fields of corn" in his poem is chiefly the verbal repetition of "field", and the alliteration of "combat" and "corn". Where Benlowes elicits the ambiguity from a word, Marvell examines the ambiguity in a human activity - mowing is like battle: the hay falls, the young bird is butchered and seized upon by the "bloody Thestylis". For Benlowes, the point of the conceit lies in the verbal opposition of "tree-ranks" and "trooping-ranks" - he follows the significance of the comparison no further. He is content to emphasise the contrast between peaceful nature and warring man; Marvell makes the far more disturbing discovery that there are strong similarities between the battle-field and the rural scene, and his wit depends on a much more immediate awareness of the actual objects of nature than Benlowes's verbal conjuring.

After the account of a spring morning (stanzas xlix-lvi) discussed above, in which the English landscape is virtually transformed into an image of the Golden Age,³⁷ and the succeeding lament for the ills of England, Benlowes brings the poem back to the countryside:-

But whither stray'st thou, Grief? Pearl'd dew arrays
 As yet the virgin-meads, whose gays
 Unbarb'd, perk up to prank the curlèd stream that plays.

By rushy-fringèd banks with purling rill,
 Meand'ring underneath the hill:
 Thus, stream-like, glides our life to Death's broad ocean still.

The pleasant grove triumphs with blooming May,
 While Melancholy scuds away;
 The painted quire on motley banks sweet notes display.

Earth's flow'r-wov'n damask doth us gently woo,
 On her embroider'd mantle to
 Repose, where various gems, like constellations, shew.

Ourselves here steal we from ourselves, by qualms
 Of pleasure, rais'd from new-coin'd Psalms,
 When skies are blue, earth green, and meadows flow with balms.

We there, on grassy tufted tapestries,
 In guiltless shades, by full-hair'd trees,
 Leaning unpillow'd heads, view Nature's ants, and bees.
 (stanzas lxxvii-lxxii, pp. 450-1)

In these stanzas - in spite of the conventional periphrases and borrowed phrases³⁸ - the profound significance of nature in the retreat movement is brought out. The objects of the countryside assume their role as comforters to the distressed mind: they help the troubled refugee to piece his "shatter'd thoughts". In contrast to the corruption and bloodshed of the times, nature is still unspoiled and peaceful. The fields of the country are "virgin-meads", and Benlowes stresses their fragile innocence by adding an "as yet". Life in the country "still" passes peacefully - it "glides" like a stream towards death. The triumph of the grove is a triumph for life - for the new growth that comes with "blooming May" - not the triumph of a victorious army. The flowery surface of the earth "doth us gently woo",

and entices us "to repose". Nature is felt here as an active agent, coaxing man to a better life of contemplation and quiet. He is taken out of himself in his communion with nature: "Ourselves here steal we from ourselves".³⁹ The shades are "guiltless", like the untouched meadows of 'The Mower Against Gardens', where nature still dispenses "A wild and fragrant Innocence". In the unfallen countryside there is still a chance of regaining the blissful state that man forfeited at the Fall. Nature can be a means of regeneration: it is far more than merely a means of escape.

Having been wooed to rest by the natural surroundings, the poet feeds his mind on the wondrous works of God, and like Sir Thomas Browne and others of his age is moved especially by the tinier creatures:-

Justly admiring more these agile ants,
Than castle-bearing elephants;
Where industry, epitomiz'd, no vigour wants.

More than at tusks of boars we wonder at
This moth's strange teeth! Legs of this gnat
Pass large-limb'd gryphons; then, on bees we musing sat;

How colonies, Realm's hope, they breed; proclaim
Their king; how nectar-courts they frame;
How they in waxen cells record their prince's fame:

Abstruser depths! here Aristotle's eye

(That Ipse of philosophy,
Nature's professor) purblind was, to search so high.

(stanzas lxxiii-lxxv and lxxviii, p.451)

The stanzas dealing with the government of the bees (two of which have been omitted from the quotation) are bookish rather than freshly observed, deriving from such sources as Pliny's Natural History; but

that referring to the moths and gnats is more interesting. Benlowes seems to relating things seen under a microscope.⁴⁰ If this is so, then the last stanza quoted means that Aristotle's eye "purblind was" because he did not have the artificial aids to examination that modern skill in optics had developed. But perhaps, since this passage leads into stanzas lxxix-lxxxii which interpret the landscape in biblical terms, he merely means that the Greek philosopher lacked the Christian revelation of God in the Scriptures, and so could not recognize "God . . . in all we see" as the enlightened believer can. Whichever interpretation is correct, the significant fact is that for Benlowes Aristotle is still the "Ipse of philosophy", in an age which was becoming increasingly sceptical about his value as "Nature's professor".

After this feast of philosophical contemplation, it is time for physical refreshment, which is also provided by nature in the form of "costless meats":-

The mount's our table, grass our carpet, well
 Our cellar, trees our banquet, cell
 Our palace, birds our music, and our plate a shell.

Nature pays all the score. Next fountain has
 Bath, drink, and glass; but our soul's glass
 Presents Religion's face. Our meal's as short as grace.

See, where the udder'd cattle find us food;
 As those sheep cloth; these hedgerows wood.
 See, now a present brought us from the neighbourhood:

Ev'n th'herb that cramp and tooth-ache drives away,
 And bribes ear-minstrels not to play;
 And from arch'd roofs to spongy bellows dew does stay;

That makes quick spirits and agile fancy rove,

And genuine warmth i'th'brain does move,
 'Bove furs and fires; whose pipe's both ventiduct, and stove;

That mounts invention with its active smoke;
 Draught of Promethean fir'd-air took,
 Renerves slack joints, and ransacks each phlegmatic nook.

That lust cloyes which expectance swells; but, here
 Are dainties, that whet taste and ear;
 Where all are cheer'd with joy, and overjoy'd with cheer.
 (stanzas cxiii-cxix, pp. 453-4)

Behind Benlowes's rather laboured and prolix expression is the idea found in Casimire⁴¹ and in famous passages in Marvell's 'Bermudas', 'Damon the Mower', and 'The Garden': nature presses upon man her various gifts. The virtues and vices of Benlowes's style are clearly represented in this passage. Having hit on the notion that nature can supply all man's wants, he must go through those wants in painful detail. But he can also sum up the whole process in the wonderfully compact phrase: "Our meal's as short as grace". The first stanza quoted above illustrates the weakness noted earlier: Benlowes too often feels that the conceit itself is sufficient to make a poetic point. He merely places the natural objects and their conceited domestic uses side by side, leaving us with a flat idea. Marvell has the gift of producing a pleasing, often sensuous, experience to embody the idea, as in:-

He makes the Figs our mouths to meet;
 And throws the Melons at our feet.

The effects of the physical satisfaction provided by nature are significant: "quick spirits and agile fancy" begin to rove; the brain is moved by "genuine warmth"; invention mounts; and the whole man is

renewed. This is similar to experiences recorded in other retirement poems, such as Marvell's 'The Garden' and a passage in More's 'Cupid's Conflict', where sensuous abundance awakens the poet's "curious phansie".⁴² Although he asserts in a passage quoted earlier, "To gadding Sense we shut the door", - a sentiment echoed by More in 'Cupid's Conflict' - Benlowes belonged to the poetic movement which found in the sensuous delights of nature a means to a loftier spiritual ecstasy.

5. Country Walk and Garden Ecstasy.

Although the last two cantos of Theophila, like the rest of the poem, sometimes have the appearance of being a loosely connected series of meditations, Benlowes does contrive to give them a kind of framework by employing the topos of the Ideal Day.⁴³ The structure of the cantos is that of two walks in the countryside, during the course of two days. The motif is introduced in stanza li of Canto XII, where the poet leads into his account of a spring dawn with the phrase: "Then walk we forth". After the meditation on the ants and bees, the "costless meats" of nature are prefaced by the remark: "Now 'tis noon" (stanza cviii, p. 453). The canto ends, immediately after the passage about being "overjoy'd with cheer":-

But, having travers'd more of ground today,
Let us, for our refreshment, stay,
And with next rising sun, complete next closing lay.
(stanza cxx, p. 454)

Canto XIII begins with the new day and an extended passage of description:-

When lavish Phoebus pours out melted gold;
 And Zephyr's breath does spice unfold;
 And we the blue-eyed sky in tissue-vest behold.

Then, view the mower, who with big-swoln veins,
 wieldeth the crookèd scythe, and strains
 To barb the flow'ry tresses of the verdant plains.

Then view we valleys, by whose fringed seams
 A brook of liquid silver streams,
 Whose water crystal seems, sand gold, and pebbles gems;

Where bright-scal'd gliding fish on trembling line
 We strike, when they our hook entwine:
 Thence do we make a visit to a grave divine.

With harmless shepherds we sometimes do stay,
 Whose plainness does outvie the gay,
 While nibbling ewes do bleat, and frisking lambs do stray.

With them, we strive to recollect, and find
 Dispers'd flocks of our rambling mind;
 Internal vigils are to that due work design'd.
 (stanzas i-vi, p. 455)

After stanzas devoted to sheep-shearing, oxen, and ploughing,
 Benlowes turns to the ripening corn and fruit:-

Dry seas, with golden surges, ebb and flow;
 The ripening ears smile as we go,
 With boasts to crack the barn, so numberless they show.

.
 Soon as the sultry month has mellow'd corn,
 Gnats shake their spears, and wind their horn;
 The hinds do sweat through both their skins, and shopsters
 scorn.

Their orchards with ripe fruit impregnèd be,
 Fruit that from taste of death is free,
 And such as gives delight with choice variety.

Yet who in's thriving mind improves his state,
 And Virtue steward makes, his fate
 Transcends; he's rich at an inestimable rate.

He shuns prolixer law-suits; . . .
 (stanzas xii and xiv-xvii, pp. 455-6)

Benlowes gives the impression here of wandering through the countryside and seeing and hearing the things around him. In fact the passage is a patchwork of borrowed phrases and details. The greatest debt is to Milton. The scheme for the whole sequence is based on the similar survey of rural sights and activities in 'L'Allegro', but several other sources are drawn on as well.⁴⁴ Milton's landscape, however, has a realism which Benlowes forfeits by using the same kind of artificial imagery we have noted before. The golden sands, crystal streams, gem-like pebbles, silver brooks and so on were recurring features of poetic accounts of an earthly paradise.⁴⁵ Milton was to exploit the technique in the description of Eden in Book IV of Paradise Lost. Benlowes's use of this hyperbole is pretty, but in the end merely extravagant; Milton takes the cliché and applies it in a situation which enhances it. He is not extravagantly praising an ordinary scene, but is trying to convey the impression of a scene that is itself extraordinary, and so lends the traditional imagery a new aptness. Benlowes has been praised for the realism of his mowers,⁴⁶ with their "big-swoln veins"; but several of his phrases are borrowed (see n. 44 above), and the artificiality of the conceit of giving the fields a hair-cut has nothing of the genuine realism of Marvell's superb lines in 'Damon the Mower':-

While thus he threw his Elbow round,
 Depopulating all the Ground,
 And, with his whistling Sythe, does cut
 Each stroke between the Earth and Root.

In this, as in other descriptive passages, Benlowes is usually satisfied with the current coin of poetry, without perceiving its full range of association or creating a complete imaginative situation for it. In stanza xi, omitted from the quotation above, he describes how "the aery choristers distend their throats". Marvell uses a similar periphrasis in stanza lxiv of Upon Appleton House - "the winged Quires" - but he sets them in the natural temple of the wood, where the trees are seen as columns and arches, so that the birds can appropriately be interpreted as choirs. Benlowes's birds are choristers simply because they sing, and because many poets before him used similar images. Another example occurs in stanza xiv, where the "Gnats shake their spears, and wind their horn". There is no significance accorded to the image of the spears, outside the purely descriptive conceit which sees the gnats' stings as weapons. By contrast, when Marvell's bee "runs you through, or asks the word" in stanza xl of Upon Appleton House, the image comes as the climax of an extended conceit which describes the objects in the gardens of a retired general in terms of his former occupation, and which leads to a meditation on the Civil War and the natural peace which it has destroyed. The greater poet develops a complex situation in which the equation of an insect's sting with a soldier's weapon is much more than physically descriptive.

Once again, the transition from description to moral commentary is clumsily managed. The connection between the account of impending harvest and the warning against "prolixer law-suits" is, to say the

least, tenuous. Benlowes seems to enjoy stringing together descriptive items that have taken his fancy in other poets' work, and he can partly justify his landscape passages by the theme of retirement, but he is unable to give them any essential significance in the development of his moral arguments.

After depicting the earthly landscape, and rejecting the embroilments of the town, Benlowes turns to the spiritual garden and the moment of ecstasy:-

He may to groves of myrrh in triumph pace,
Where roots of Nature, flow'rs of Grace,
And fruits of Glory bud. A glimpse of Heav'n the place.

This the Spring-Garden to spiritual eyes,
Which fragrant scent of gums outvies;
Three kings had thence their triple mystic sacrifice.

Oh, happier walks, where CHRIST, and none beside,
Is journey's End, and way, and Guide!
Where from the humble plains are greatest heights descry'd.

Heav'nward his gaze. Here does a bower display
His bride-groom, and SCRIPTURIA
Herself is bride; each morn presents his marriage-day.

What ecstasy's in this delicious grove!
Th'unwitness'd witness of his love!
What pow'r so strongly can as flam'd affections move!

The larks, wing'd travellers, that trail the sky,
Unsoil'd with lusts, aloft do fly,
Warbling SCRIPTURIA, SCRIPTURIA on high.

(stanzas xxii-xxvii, p. 456)

The basis of this passage is the garden of the Song of Songs, where Christ is the bride-groom and the soul, or Theophila, is the bride. Benlowes had already exploited this tradition once, in Canto XII, where he is concerned with the ecstatic song of the inspired poet rather than the experience of ecstasy itself:-

Such mental buds we from each object take,
 And, for CHRIST'S Spouse, of them we make
 Spiritual wreaths, nor do we her own words forsake.

'Arise, O North, and thou, O South-wind, blow;
 Let scent of flow'rs, and spices flow,
 That the BELOVED may into His Garden go'.

Whose beauty flow'rs, whose height made lofty trees,
 Whose permanence made Time, and these
 Pay tribute by returns to him, as springs to seas.

This steals our soul from her thick loom, t'aspire
 To canzons, tin'd with enthean fire;
 Taking high wing to soar up to the angel-ouire.
 (stanzas c-ciii, pp. 452-3)

Professor Rastvig sees Benlowes's progress towards the ecstasy as similar in its stages to that of Casimire's odes and Marvell's 'The Garden'. The last two cantos of Theophila, she writes, "exhibit the same pattern of ideas" as Casimire's work, and Benlowes clearly "interpreted the Horatian tradition in a way completely typical of the Polish Horace".⁴⁷ Solitary musing in the countryside - "Sweet Secess" - first blesses the intellect "with fuller knowledge" and restores the "shatter'd thoughts" of the mind disturbed by the ways of the world; nature woos the mind and body into a state of repose, in which it contemplates its surroundings, "justly admiring" the ants and bees and other wondrous works of God; taking "mental buds" from every object, the soul takes wing and joins the angel choir in its exultant praise of the Creator. The spring landscape of Canto XII, which itself seems to be an image of the Golden Age on earth, finally gives place to the "Spring-Garden to spiritual eyes", where the soul enters into communion with its Maker and is granted a

"glimpse of Heav'n". The imagery of Canto XIII, stanza xxii, may have been derived from Vaughan's 'The Morning-watch', which was printed in Silex Scintillans in 1650, so that Benlowes could have seen it before he completed Theophila for the press in 1652.

Vaughan's poem begins:-

O Joyes! Infinite sweetnes! with what flowres,
And shoots of glory, my soul breakes, and buds!

Many poets of the period wrote of ecstatic moments in the shade of trees, but Benlowes is one of a small number who related the experience so explicitly to a Christian and Biblical tradition. As Professor Rostvig remarks:-

Few English poets combined the beatus ille themes more persistently with the ecstatic strains of Canticles than Edward Benlowes.⁴⁸

Towards the close of the last canto, as is the manner both of pastoral poems and quasi-mystical meditations, Benlowes brings the reader back to the natural scene and the light of common day:-

But, hark, 'tis late; the whistlers knock from plough;
The droiling swineherd's drum beats now;
Maids have their curtsies made to th'spongy-teated cow.

Larks roosted are, the folded flocks are pent
In hurdled grates, the tir'd ox sent
In loose trace home, now Hesper lights his torch in's tent.

See glimmering light, the Pharos of our cot;
By innocence protected, not
By guards, we thither tend, where ev'nsong's not forgot.

.
When dark'ning mists our hemisphere invade,
Of all the air when one blot's made,
Mortals immantled in their silent gloomy shade,

Then for an hour (elixir of delight!)

We, Heav'n beleag'ring, pray and write,
 When every eye is lock'd, but those that watch the night.
 (stanzas lxxxii-iv and xc-xci, pp.460-1)

Miltonic phrases and details echo through these lines.⁴⁹ The third line is more original, however, and contains one of Benlowes's more delightful images, cleverly combining the visual reality with a charming conceit. With the darkening of the hemisphere, as in Marvell's Upon Appleton House, the rural day comes to^a close, and the poet pursues his devotions secure in the pastoral, Horatian, and Christian "innocence" of his "cot".

6. Conclusion.

Professor Røstvig, noting that many of the details from nature in the last two cantos of Theophila were taken up by Marvell for use in Upon Appleton House, remarks that "Much of the praise which is generally given to Marvell as a poet of nature, ought to be passed on to Benlowes".⁵⁰ But the examples quoted in this chapter have shown that, no matter where either poet derived his images from, Marvell was able to invest his with a freshness and complexity of meaning that were beyond the powers of Benlowes. Benlowes does not give the impression, except in occasional flashes, that he is excited by the details themselves, as real objects in a real landscape. He was, as his biographer concludes, "a man of the study rather than the fields".⁵¹ But his achievement is not to be despised. His contribution to the development of the religious aspects of retirement poetry is by no means negligible, and he deserves to be remembered as one who "did his best to maintain the pursuit of culture and the habit of devotion amid the political convulsions of that age".⁵²

NOTES

1. The facts of Benlowes's life are taken from Harold Jenkins, Edward Benlowes (1602-1676): Biography of a Minor Poet (London, 1952).
2. See Jenkins, pp. 67-82 for an account of Benlowes's patronage of these poets.
3. See Christopher Hill, "Benlowes and his Times", Essays in Criticism, III (1953), 143-151.
4. But one must remember that two of the most typical and popular of "metaphysical" volumes, Cleveland's Poems and Cowley's The Mistress were published as late as 1647.
5. Maren-Sofie Røstvig, The Happy Man, 2nd ed. (New York, 1962), I, 151
6. Jenkins, p. 33.
7. *ibid.*, pp. 109 and 110-111.
8. Minor Poets of the Caroline Period, ed. George Saintsbury, Vol. I (Oxford, 1905), p. 369. All quotations from Theophila are taken from this volume, and all future page references will appear in the text.
9. Abraham Cowley: Essays, Plays and Sundry Verses, ed. A.R. Waller (Cambridge, 1906), p. 410.
10. George Daniel also scorned man's attempt "To Circle mightie Nature" within the compass of human reason in Ode XIII (see above, Chapter IX, Section 3); and Milton was to make Raphael advise the curious Adam to "be lowly wise:/Think only what concerns thee and thy being", in Paradise Lost, Book VIII, ll. 173-4. The Duchess of Newcastle, however, and other poets of the 1650s and 1660s were to take the kind of interest in nature illustrated by Cowley's lines.
11. The appeal to the inner light, the "Candle of the Lord", or some other principle within man which could lead men into the ways of truth was a common feature of seventeenth-century thought. See above, Chapter II, Section 9.
12. See above, Chapter IX, Section 4.
13. For a discussion of Daniel's poem see above, Chapter IX, Section 3.
14. These lines are from Upon Appleton House, stanza xlix.
15. See H.J.L. Robbie, "Benlowes: A Seventeenth-Century Plagiarist", Modern Language Review, XXIII (1928), 342-344; and Harold Jenkins, "Benlowes and Milton", Modern Language Review, XLIII (1948), 186-195.
16. Jenkins, Edward Benlowes, pp. 111-112.
17. Benlowes should not be classed in the same category as Robert Baron, who stole material from Milton's Poems. See Raymond Dexter Havens, The Influence of Milton on English Poetry (Cambridge, Mass., 1922), p. 669.
18. See above, Chapter V, Section 6.
19. Jenkins, *op. cit.*, p. 121.
20. *ibid.*, p. 123.

21. See the article cited n. 15 above, and Appendix II (pp. 309-313) of his Edward Benlowes.
22. Jenkins, Edward Benlowes, p. 163.
23. See her article, "Benlowes, Marvell, and the Divine Casimire", Huntington Library Quarterly, XVIII (1954), 13-35, and The Happy Man, I, 140-1 and 148-150.
24. The Happy Man, I, 145.
25. See Jenkins, Edward Benlowes, pp. 11-12.
26. *ibid.*, p. 115.
27. See 'To Amoret, of the difference 'twixt him, and other Lovers', The Works of Henry Vaughan, ed. L.C. Martin, 2nd. ed. (Oxford, 1957), p. 12; 'Reason: The use of it in Divine Matters', The English Writings of Abraham Cowley, ed. A.R. Waller, Vol. I (Cambridge, 1905), p.46; and Upon Appleton House, stanza lxxxvi.
28. See above, Chapter V, Section 5, for an account of the emblem.
29. See above, Chapter IV, Section 2.
30. Poems, ed. R. Dunlap (Oxford, 1949), p.3.
31. See above, Chapter V, Section 4a. See especially Fane's description of how sin "did bring/My whole Man to a wintering".
32. See the account of this kind of conventional periphrasis in Chapter IV, Section 2 above.
33. See above, Chapter IV, Section 1 for periphrastic descriptions of dawn.
34. See the discussion of the use of this image by Herbert, Daniel, Vaughan, and Joseph Beaumont, in Chapter IA, Section 4 above.
35. See above, Chapter VI, Section 5.
36. Fane had described plants as a "Life-guard" in 'To Sir J. Wentworth', Otia Sacra (1648), p. 154; Waller, in 'At Penshurst' had plants standing "in even ranks", "Like some well-marshalled and obsequious band", Poems, ed. G. Thorn Drury (London, 1893), Vol. I, p. 46; and Cleveland, in 'Upon Philis walking', had "trees, like yeomen of her guard", which were "Ranked on each side" of his lady, Minor Poets of the Caroline Period, ed. George Saintsbury, Vol. III (Oxford, 1921), pp. 35-6.
37. Professor Røstvig sees Benlowes returning several times to the motif of the rural scene as an image of the Golden Age or Earthly Paradise. See The Happy Man, I, 140, 144, 145.
38. The "painted quire", the "purling rill", the "embroider'd mantle" and such-like periphrases are very common, and formed the staple of descriptive poetic diction for the next century or more. The phrase "rushy-fringed banks" derives from Comus; "prank" is probably a reminiscence of 'Lycidas'.
39. Fane, in 'To Retiredness', describes a similar experience as his thoughts "by this retreat/Grow stronger, like contracted heat" and "ravish into Mysterie"; Marvell also deals with similar moments in 'The Garden' and Upon Appleton House, stanzas lxxiv-v.
40. Røstvig interprets these lines as evidence that Benlowes was familiar with the wonders revealed by the microscope, The Happy

Man, I, 146.

41. See Casimire, Ode 21, Lib. 4, in Hills's translation of Odes of Casimire (1646), p. 87.
42. See above, Chapter VI, Section 5 for a discussion of More's poem.
43. See above, Chapter VI, Section 2.
44. The "tissue-vest" is an echo of the "tissued clouds" ('Ode on the Morning of Christ's Nativity', l. 146); the third line of stanza v is an expansion of "Where the nibling flocks do stray" ('L'Allegro', l. 72); in the omitted stanzas, viii and ix, are more borrowings from the ode and 'L'Allegro'; the first two lines of stanza xiv are derived from "What time the Gray-fly winds her sultry horn" ('Lycidas', l. 28. All these borrowings from Milton are noted by Harold Jenkins in Edward Benlowes, Appendix II, pp. 309-313. He also points out that the reference to the mower in stanza ii owes its origin to some lines from Thomas Tomkis's play, Lingua (1607):-
 "The sturdie Mower, that with brawnie armes,
 Wieldeth the crooked sithe". (V, xvi)
 For this information see Jenkins's book, p. 121.
 Professor Røstvig records borrowings from Casimire throughout this passage, especially in the lines about the ripening corn. See The Happy Man, I, 148-9.
45. See above, Chapter IV, Section 3 for an account of the Earthly Paradise. Cf. especially Cowley's version of Pindar's 'Second Olympique Ode':-
 "There Silver Rivers through enamell'd Meadows glide,
 And golden Trees enrich their side".
46. Røstvig considers that "Benlowes possessed a curiously felicitous ability to focus on realistic and concrete detail". (The Happy Man, I, 148).
47. Maren-Sofie Røstvig, "Benlowes, Marvell, and the Divine Casimire", Huntington Library Quarterly, XVIII (1954), p. 16.
48. Røstvig, The Happy Man, I, 140.
49. Jenkins notes Miltonic influence on stanza lxxxiii, in images and phrases taken from Comus, and he sees the influence of 'L'Allegro' as pervasive. (Edward Benlowes, pp. 310-311).
50. Røstvig, The Happy Man, 1st ed. (London and Oslo, 1954), p. 233. In the revised 2nd ed. Professor Røstvig tempers her praise of Benlowes "as a poet of nature".
51. Jenkins, Edward Benlowes, p. 97.
52. *ibid.*, p. 10.

Chapter XII

Andrew Marvell

Details from the world of nature play a more prominent and a more significant part in the poetry of Andrew Marvell than in that of any other poet of the mid-seventeenth century. Many of his finest poems deal directly with the natural scene - 'The Garden', 'Bermudas', Upon Appleton House, the Mower poems; many others rely heavily on images from nature either for their total metaphoric structure - 'The Coronet' and 'On a Drop of Dew' - or for incidental illustration, often at crucial moments in a poem's development. Nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century enthusiasts for his work saw in it a unique anticipation of Romanticism, and stressed the value of "little circumstances of rural nature", "the intoxication of meadow, and woodland, and garden . . . the unreserved abandonment of self to the sway of influences", the "passionate nature-worship", "the happy contemplation of natural scenery",¹ as if these things were ends in themselves, and the simple appreciation of them a sufficient response to Marvell's handling of natural details. More recent criticism has recognized that Marvell is a much more complex writer than the "Romantic" account allows, and that the function of nature in his poetry is far from simple. The modern view is distilled in a comment by Joseph H. Summers:-

An examination of Marvell's uses of 'Nature', the world of the flowers and fruits and the green grass, provides a sketch not only of the virtuosity and multiple intellectual and moral stances within the poems, but also of the central vision which occurs most frequently in the most successful poems.²

Another commentator, S.L. Goldberg, sees the chief significance of Marvell's nature imagery in the fact that he was a poet who seized on his "response to nature" as "a way of bringing to focus other kinds of experience".³ The word "response" covers a multitude of possible approaches to experience, but one aspect of Marvell's "response to nature" which clearly sets him apart from his contemporaries (with the major exception of Milton) is its sensuousness. It was his extraordinary ability to evoke the sights and sounds and textures of natural objects that deceived the early critics into regarding him as a Romantic born before his time. One of Marvell's most perceptive modern critics, Robert Ellrodt, has gone so far as to say that in spite of all the wit and ingenuity with which he contrives his descriptions of nature, "cela n'empêche point que la sensation soit l'objet de son art et la source du plaisir poétique".⁴ Whereas Donne's poetry - and in a more trivial way that of his followers - operates a process of what J.B. Leishman has called "an intellectualising of sensation",⁵ Marvell, even when his images serve an intellectual or symbolic purpose in the context of the poem, provides the reader at the same time with a sensuous experience.

Once the sensuous quality of Marvell's use of natural details has been emphasised, however, attention must be directed to another feature of his poetry which will counteract any temptation to see him as a simple poet of the senses and nothing more. Although his work has an air of freshness and spontaneity, Goldberg points out that "it is also deliberated and courteously restrained; being so, it is as if it

thoroughly understands itself".⁶ This should remind us that Marvell was an extremely literary and sophisticated artist.⁷ One must be prepared to read each natural image, however sensuous its immediate appeal, in the context not only of a particular poem, but also of the traditional genre to which the poem belongs. More than that, one must also take into account his practice of combining elements from various genres, and sometimes of parodying or burlesquing inherited forms. He is one of the most eclectic and allusive poets in an age notorious for its literary miscegenation. As Leishman has put it, "his poetry, although in the highest degree original, would have been impossible without the numerous literary sources from which he derived inspiration, stimulation and suggestion".⁸ Those sources extended beyond merely poetic traditions like the pastoral, the emblem, and the Horatian retirement poem, to include various branches of philosophical and theological thought and vocabulary. Recent scholars have pointed out that Marvell could have heard and met at Cambridge all the leading figures of the Cambridge Platonist movement,⁹ and that while he was at Nun Appleton Lord Fairfax was engaged in translating the Song of Songs, French libertin poetry, and a commentary on the Hermetic writings - work on which he is highly likely to have consulted his daughter's tutor of languages.¹⁰ Traces of all this learning, and much more,¹¹ have been found in his poems, and one must accept the possibility that any particular natural image may contain an allusion beyond itself to some possibly esoteric system of symbolism.

1. Other Kinds of Experience.

The sensuousness and the literary and philosophical self-consciousness of Marvell's art are both modified by a third characteristic - seventeenth-century wit. Wit informs not only his way of seeing and presenting the details of the natural world, but also his entire approach to life and art. T.S. Eliot's formulation of its quality has never been bettered:-

It implies a constant inspection and criticism of experience. It involves, probably, a recognition, implicit in the expression of every experience, of other kinds of experience which are possible.¹²

This helps to explain the eclecticism and allusiveness of the poetry. Marvell brings together within the formal confines of one poem elements from various genres, and images which point outwards to different complexes of symbolic thought, because he is aware that no single poetic tradition and no single philosophic system is adequate as an expression of the complexity of life. As Eliot insists, this is not cynicism, but a mature acceptance of the diversity of the nature of things and the limitations of human comprehension.¹³ The other great poets of the period - Vaughan and Milton - steered their course through the prevailing turmoil by holding fast to some guiding dogmas which enabled them to make sense of the confusion. Vaughan, more passively, subordinated all experience to the traditional teachings and symbolism of the Bible and the Church. Milton, more actively, grappled with the contradictions and hammered out his own personal certainties in faith and politics. Marvell alone, among the artists of the mid-century, responded creatively to the disorder of a period

of revolution, and made that disorder the subject and the means of expression of his poetic craft.¹⁴ The stalemate of 'A Dialogue between the Soul and Body' is symptomatic: man is an inextricable union of flesh and spirit, and the claims of either to be superior or self-sufficient during this earthly life can no more be seriously entertained than Swift's satiric division of the rational animal man into Houyhnhnm and Yahoo. The numerous modern attempts to sort out Marvell's political allegiances in 'An Horatian Ode' witness to the same persistent fidelity to the complexity of human affairs.¹⁵

Every aspect of Marvell's art is affected by this awareness of other and conflicting possibilities, from his handling of overall poetic form, through the manipulation of metaphor and concrete detail, down to the ambivalence of single words. Donald M. Friedman has stated the case admirably:-

Marvell's poetry distinguishes itself repeatedly by appearing to accept common assumptions and literary conventions, and then by proceeding to reinterpret them by revealing, with scrupulous precision and objectivity, their latent contradictions or hidden inconsistencies. . . . the bent of his mind was to examine the myriad ways in which words and symbols represent or fail to represent the ideas they were meant to express. . . . part of his intent is revealed in an implicit, and sometimes ironical commentary on the very type of poem he pretends to be writing.¹⁶

Once one has been alerted to Marvell's habit of disrupting the expected, of discovering disorder where there appears to be order and certainty, strange surprises and reversals spring up everywhere. M.C. Bradbrook and M.G. Lloyd Thomas noted an oddity in the concluding couplet of 'Bermudas':-

And all the way, to guide their Chime,
With falling Oars they kept the time.¹⁷

The oarsmen, they remark, "might be expected to sing in order to keep their stroke in rowing";¹⁸ in Marvell's poem it is the other way round. Rosalie Colie has pointed out that it is the parents of the butchered rail who are said to be orphaned in stanza lii of Upon Appleton House.¹⁹ In the first stanza of 'Upon the Hill and Grove at Bill-borow', the poet asserts that the hill rises "in a perfect hemisphere", and goes on:-

It seems as for a Model laid,
And that the World by it was made.
(p. 56)

The fantastic suggestion is that the whole was fashioned in accordance with a part which could not itself exist until the whole was in being. All normal preconceptions are thrown into confusion by this grotesque idea.

Even the expected relationship between the two halves of a simile is upset by these lines from 'Damon the Mower':-

Sharp like his Sythe his Sorrow was,
And wither'd like his Hopes the Grass.
(p. 41)

The first line tells us that an aspect of human experience - "his Sorrow" - can be compared to something in the material world - "his Sythe"; the second line destroys this pattern of comparison, and tells us that something in the material world - "the Grass" - can be compared to an aspect of human experience - "his Hopes". Which area of reference - the human or the material - is the tenor and which is the

vehicle? They both assume, at the simple level of rhetorical device, an equal significance, preventing the establishment of any firm concept of hierarchy.

Deliberate confusion reigns too in the presentation of sense impressions. In stanza xxxix of Upon Appleton House the flower-soldiers let off "fragrant Vollyes":-

Well shot ye Firemen! Oh how sweet,
And round your equal Fires do meet;
Whose shrill report no Ear can tell,
But Ecchoes to the Eye and smell.
(p. 68)

And beneath the columns of the wood, in stanza lxiv:-

the winged Quires
Echo about their tuned Fires.
(p. 74)

The sight and scent of the flowers are expressed in terms of sound; the song of the birds is like the sensation of fire. The governing wit of the poem recognizes, and translates into language, the fact that the man who experiences cannot be divided into the man who hears and the man who sees and the man who smells, any more than he can be divided into body and soul. Admittedly, there is a conscious element of the outrageous in these passages, as there is in the couplet dealing with the senses in 'A Dialogue between the Soul and Body':-

Here blinded with an Eye; and there
Deaf with the drumming of an Ear.
(p. 20)

Marvell is not attempting to make some abstruse metaphysical or physiological point. But it is interesting to note that in his manipulation of the senses there occurs the same process of breaking down conven-

tional categories that we have seen elsewhere.

The idea that nothing is quite what it seems, that it might take on a significantly different appearance if viewed from a different point of view, comes out most clearly in Marvell's exploitation of visual impressions.²⁰ A simple example occurs in 'A Poem upon the Death of O.C.', where the poet likens Cromwell to a sacred oak which has been laid low by lightning:-

The tree ere while foreshortned to our view,
When fall'n shews taller yet than as it grew.
(ll. 269-270, p. 129)

This is a question of simple optics. Looking up at the growing tree one can gain no exact impression of its height; but when it is stretched out along the ground, its full size can be appreciated. As always with this poet, the image itself, however brilliantly perceived and expressed, serves another purpose. Just as brilliant as a perception of human affairs is the idea that Cromwell's stature as a statesman and leader bulks even larger in a political world that must carry on without him.

Similar, but more detailed in its account of appearances that change as the observer shifts his position, is the approach to the woodland sanctuary in stanzas lxiii-lxiv of Upon Appleton House. The apparent density and darkness of the wood seen from the distance proves to be an illusion as the poet draws nearer, and passes between the individual trunks. Illusory, too, is the impression that the boats on the river beyond the hayfield are sailing between the stooks left by the mowers, in stanza lv. An illusion which depends not on

distance, or on the observer changing his vantage point, but on his actually being in motion, is the kinetic impression that the trees on either side of an avenue are parting as he walks between them (stanza lxxviii).

Colour is the cause of visual deception in the description of the faun lying "like a bank of Lillies" among "the flaxen Lillies" (p. 23). Only when movement is added to colour can the creature be distinguished from its background. Once again, the perception extends into wider significance. The faun is not only white, like the lilies which are an emblem of purity, but it becomes so completely identified with them by this trick of vision that it cannot be recognized as having any existence apart from them.

In the unknown meadows of Nun Appleton established hierarchies are disturbed by another trick of sight (stanza xlvii): men are dwarfed by the long grass, and the grasshoppers perched on the top of the blades look down on them, attaining an unusual perspective which reverses traditional roles of height and lowness - concepts which had moral and philosophical connotations in much seventeenth-century poetry.²¹

The most extraordinary of all Marvell's manipulations of perspective is his description of the cattle grazing the mown fields, in stanza lvi of Upon Appleton House. Ellrodt has written of these lines:-

In Marvell's world the dimensions no longer have any absolute value. Microscopic and cosmic vision are superimposed in close

up in the same field of vision without disconcerting us.²²

More than this, if one goes beyond the visual wit to the implications of this way of looking, one realises that Marvell is using optical tricks to bring into relationship cattle and human features, fleas and constellations. The poetic method employed in passages like this is obviously related to the "metaphysical descriptions" of such poets as Cleveland, Cartwright, and Revett,²³ but Marvell's purpose in yoking together heterogeneous items is more serious than the fashionable search for ingenuity. They are all elements in the great design that man sees when he looks upon the universe revealed to him by his senses. During Marvell's lifetime the microscope and the telescope were bringing within the range of man's vision aspects of that design that he had not imagined could exist, and were causing him to rethink his assumptions about the extent and nature of God's creation. It may not be too fanciful to discern in Marvell's preoccupation with the distorting and revelatory power of sight an aspect of that creative response to the confusion of his age which was mentioned earlier. Kitty Scoular has defended his use of surprising descriptive conceits "as the only way of presenting some oddity of perception or another".²⁴ Perhaps one can elaborate this, and say that it is not simply the odd things that he perceives which intrigue Marvell, but the actual process by which he perceives them. How far can man trust the senses which are his only means of knowing the universe? How far can he trust the wit which prompts him to find correspondences between fleas and constellations? If he is forced to recognize "in the expression of every experience" the possibility of "other kinds of experience" -

if his experience of the wood seen from far off has to admit the different and equally valid experience of the wood close to - how can man, like the benighted Mower, ever find his home? Everything is in disarray; harmony has been disrupted at all levels. In the microcosm there is tension between mind and body, between reason and faith; in politics there is Civil War; in the Church there is conflict between tradition and individualism, between Anglican and Puritan, not to mention the greater rift between Roman and Protestant; in the macrocosm there is the break-up of the mediaeval system of the universe. And with this disorder within the various levels of being comes a breaking of the bonds which link man to his surroundings. Each individual has to decide for himself where his allegiances are to lie - in relation to the state, religion, philosophy, and the whole Creation of which he is a part. Critics have identified a host of conflicting forces in Marvell's response to this state of affairs: mind and body, man and nature, innocence and experience, nature and art, action and contemplation, harmony and alienation, growth and destruction.²⁵

As Barbara Everett has said:-

The dialect of Marvell's poetry not only suggests, but necessitates such distinctions and formulations; its intellectual wit springs from a clear sense of warring, but therefore reconcilable, oppositions.²⁶

The rest of this chapter will attempt to analyse how Marvell expresses the "sense of warring" and explores the possibility of reconciliation in particular poems. This will entail a close study of both how he uses natural details, and what he uses them for, since, as Goldberg

remarks, "concentrating on nature" was Marvell's method of "discovering the living self and the contexts in which it lives".²⁷

2. The Pastoral Perspective: 'The Gallery' and 'The Unfortunate Lover'.

Of all the literary genres available to Marvell as the basis for an exploration of man's relationship with society, religion, politics, and above all nature, the one which could best provide him with the necessary metaphoric and thematic resources was the pastoral. Many critics have commented on his debt to the pastoral tradition in particular poems or groups of poems.²⁸ But a recent study has argued persuasively that pastoral is the very core of Marvell's work. Donald M. Friedman writes in Marvell's Pastoral Art:-

It seems to me that all of Marvell's good poetry responds in some degree to the demands of the pastoral vision, considered as one of the major ways of literary thinking that the European mind has found and followed. . . . when he wants to suggest the graces of civilization that have been tarnished or lost through the violence of the Civil War, when he wants to embody poetically the beauties of innocence, of contemplative clarity, of the orderliness of the created world which both serves as a model for, and succumbs to, the power of human rationality, when he wishes, above all, to pay homage to the deep-rooted creativity of traditions and institutions which link man and the outside world in a fruitful harmony - whenever, in short, Marvell confronts one of the many themes in his poetry that require the just weighing of different but desirable forms of action or thought, his mind turns to the paradigm of such evaluative experience, the pastoral mode.²⁹

Marvell is able to use the pastoral as a vehicle for this wide range of preoccupations because it brings with it symbols of a readily recognizable significance and a fixed set of ethical and aesthetic standards. "Use" is the operative word, since he is rarely content to write simply within the conventions of the genre. 'Amatas and

'Thestylis making Hay-Ropes' is the only example of pure pastoral, with its invitation to love, its coy delay, and its gay conclusion:-

Then let's both lay by our Rope,
And go kiss within the Hay.
(p. 46)

More often, he sets the pastoral ethic over against another set of values, either in order to comment adversely on those alien values, or to expose the deficiencies of the pastoral ethic itself. 'Daphnis and Chloe' and 'Mourning' are examples of the former technique, where, in the words of Bradbrook and Lloyd Thomas, "it is Nature, the Nature of the pastorals, which supplies the positive standards by which the courtly lovers are criticized".³⁰ 'The Gallery' and 'The Unfortunate Lover' belong to the second group. In these two pieces, Marvell exploits the imagery and attitudes of pastoral to demonstrate that they offer an oversimplified version of the complexity of human love.

In 'The Gallery', the stanza which sets up the pastoral point of reference comes at the end. After describing Clora in the various guises of an "Inhumane Murtheress", a sensual Aurora, an "Enchantress", and a Venus, the lover concludes:-

But, of these Pictures and the rest,
That at the Entrance likes me best:
Where the same Posture, and the Look
Remains, with which I first was took.
A tender shepherdess, whose Hair
Hangs loosely playing in the Air,
Transplanting Flow'rs from the green Hill,
To crown her Head, and Bosome fill.
(p. 30)

The idea behind the poem is that a woman can be different things at different times, not all of them pleasant. The mature lover recognizes

that human nature is a variable quality, that it is unrealistic to expect a woman to be always the same, and cheerfully accepts both the torments and the pleasures. This in itself is an implicit comment on the pastoral convention by which all women were shepherdesses. So when the pastoral picture is at last reached, we are prepared to see it is just another "Posture". Several details in this stanza are of significance. Firstly, the portrait of Clora as a shepherdess is "at the Entrance" to the Gallery: does this suggest that love at the outset is simple-minded, like pastoral? Secondly, when the lover claims that he "first was took" by her pastoral disguise, does he imply that he was "taken in"?³¹ One assumes that he only later discovered that she could be murderess and enchantress as well as shepherdess. By the time we come to the pastoral picture, we have been made aware of "other kinds of experience" that are possible. Thirdly, the last couplet raises the question of man's relationship to nature: Clora fashions the creatures of nature to her own purpose - she removes the flowers from their natural environment, "the green Hill", and puts them to the unnatural use of human adornment. Nature gives way before Art. "Transplanting" is a quibbling evasion, since the flowers are not being planted in soil that can sustain them, but are being wilfully destroyed in the interests of human vanity. This raises a problem that is explored in the Mower poems and epitomised in the couplet, very reminiscent of this one, which ends 'A Dialogue between the Soul and Body':-

So Architects do square and hew,
 Green Trees that in the Forest grew.
 (p. 21)

The first stanza of 'The Unfortunate Lover' provides a background against which the melodramatic and horrific tale of the Lover is to be acted out:-

Alas, how pleasant are their dayes
 With whom the Infant Love yet playes!
 Sorted by pairs, they still are seen
 By Fountains cool, and Shadows green.
 But soon these Flames do lose their light,
 Like Meteors of a Summers night:
 Nor can they to that Region climb,
 To make impression upon Time.
 (p. 27)

The key to this passage lies in the natural details and in the time references. The pairs of happy lovers are "still" seen, they are "yet" the playmates of "the Infant Love", but "soon" their happiness will fade. The ambiguity of "the Infant Love" is crucial: the phrase either alludes to Cupid, the child god who appears in so many pastoral poems, or to the innocent love of infancy.³²

The "Fountains cool, and Shadows green" are the two images most frequently associated with the pastoral life of innocence and ease. In the opening lines of Virgil's First Eclogue, Meliboeus addresses Tityrus, who is lying "lentus in umbra", and later apostrophizes him:-

Fortunate senex, hic inter flumina nota
 et fontis sacros frigus captabis opacum.
 (ll. 51-2)

And in the Seventh Eclogue, the two images again occur together:-

Muscosi fontes et somno mollier herba,
 et quae vos rara viridis tegit arbutus umbra.
 (ll. 45-6)

Vaughan's 'To the River Isca' contains a passage about the paradise to which the poets who sing of rivers ascend:-

Hence th'Auncients say, That, from this sickly aire
 They passe to Regions more refin'd and faire,
 To Meadows strow'd with Lillies and the Rose,
 And shades whose youthfull green no old age knowes.
 (ll. 19-22)

Here again are green shadows, and, moreover, allusions to time and to "Regions more refin'd and faire" which help to fill out the imaginative context of the images in Marvell's stanza.

By introducing the details of fountains and shadows, Marvell is calling up the pastoral world. But by setting them within a context of time and change, he causes us to recognize the pastoral world for what it is - a comforting, but finally untenable, myth. A conventional pastoral would either set the Golden Age of Love firmly in the past - a kind of erotic paradise lost - as in Lovelace's 'Love Made in the First Age'; or it would ignore the consequences of time, and shut out all those aspects of experience which might detract from the supreme joy of kissing "within the Hay". Marvell seems to be acknowledging the psychological, rather than the historical validity of the pastoral myth. The Golden Age belongs not to the past of the human race, but to the past of each human being; it is the age of innocence, of Vaughan's "youthfull green", of "the Infant Love", which each child knows before the "prison shades" of experience and awareness of time and "old age" and passion close in. It is by exploiting what Friedman calls "the vocabularies of natural description or natural mythology"³³ which the pastoral tradition supplies that Marvell is able to achieve

this complex comment on human love so economically.

The second half of the stanza also relies on the reader's response to traditional imagery. The simile of the "Meteors of a Summers night" which "lose their light" functions at a purely sensuous level - the "Flames" of love fade away like a shooting star. But the image has additional associations. Herbert used it in 'The Answer':-

As a young exhalation, newly waking,
Scorns his first bed of dirt, and means the sky;
But cooling by the way, grows pursie and slow,
And settling to a cloud, doth live and die
In that dark state of tears. . . '34

The image also occurs in one of Donne's epithalamions and in Vaughan's 'To Amoret, of the difference 'twixt him, and other Lovers, and what true Love is' and 'Disorder and Frailty'. In his commentary on the latter, L.C. Martin quotes the lines from Herbert's 'The Answer' and also the following passage from Scott's translation of Stobaei

Hermetica:-

And below the moon are stars of another sort, perishable and inert, which are so composed as to last but for a little time, rising as exhalations from the earth itself into the air above the earth; and we can see their dissolution with our own eyes. . . . [They] do not attain to the region of heaven . . . they are dragged down by their own matter, and are quickly dissipated, and being broken up, they fall down again to earth, having effected nothing except a troubling of the air above the earth.³⁵

It is easy to see how appropriate the associations of this natural detail are to the theme of 'The Unfortunate Lover'. The youthful "pairs", like Herbert's "young exhalation", know nothing of the brutal facts of life and time. They scorn their "bed of dirt", not knowing what it means to be mortal, and aim at "the sky". But they are

destined "to last but for a little time", and "their own matter" drags them back to the realities of earth, "To their first, low birth". If the "Flames" of Marvell's poem are "spurious", "false", and mere "vanities" like those of Vaughan's 'To Amoret', then there may be an interesting parallel in the "foolish Fires" which lead the Mower astray in 'The Mower to the Glo-worms'. The phrase "a Summers night" furnishes a fine example of Marvell's ability to extract every ounce of meaning from a natural image. It suggests the fleetingness of innocent love, which can last no longer than a meteor in the night sky; and it also suggests the warmth and beauty of the short-lived idyll, relating back to the pastoral setting of cool fountains and green shadows.

In the last two lines of the stanza, Marvell takes up other features of his meteor image, and makes them contribute to the embracing theme of time. The lovers, like the meteors, cannot climb to "that Region" - the Hermetic "region of heaven", the "Regions more refin'd and faire" attained by the souls of poets in Vaughan's 'To the River Isca'. Because the pastoral Golden Age is only the short phase of innocence, and not an "eternal spring" in which man can stay, he must resign himself to "live and die" in Herbert's "dark state of tears". He cannot, even through love, "make impression upon Time", because he cannot transcend time. The rest of the poem presents in extravagant terms the experience of love in time - shipwreck, despair, storms, wars, and finally death - as a foil to the lost innocence of love lamented in the first stanza (the first word of the poem is

"Alas"). Without the pastoral context provided by the natural details of this stanza, the poem would be meaningless bombast. Within the context, it becomes a grim and moving comment on the nature of human existence. The questions of time and eternity, innocence and experience, "the Infant Love", and a fleeting world of "Fountains cool, and Shadows green" which are broached here were to become the major preoccupations of Andrew Marvell throughout his career as a lyric poet.

3. The Infant Love: 'The Picture of Little T.C. in a Prospect of Flowers' and 'The Nymph complaining for the death of her Faun'.

Several of his poems deal directly with "the Infant Love", exploiting the familiar topos of addresses "to very young ladies".³⁶ 'Young Love' contains little of interest for this study, apart from the variation on a conventional image:-

Whose fair Blossoms are too green
Yet for Lust, but not for Love;

and two remarks about time:- the poet declares that if the "little infant" would love him:-

Pretty surely 'twere to see
By young Love old Time beguil'd;

and three stanzas later:-

Now then love me: time may take
Thee before thy time away.
(p. 25)

Human love can make no "impression upon Time", since it is essentially time-bound. But "young Love", in the innocent days of infancy, may beguile time for a while, may live in happy oblivion of the "winged

Charriot hurrying near". But the adult poet cannot maintain this pretext for long. He is aware, even in this happy dalliance with the child, that time may sweep up at any moment and snatch her away. The peculiar delicacy and poignancy of this poem derives from this two-fold attitude to time - the child is oblivious of its existence, the adult is acutely conscious of it, while pretending to make a virtue of "this Need".

The theme is taken up again, and given a much richer imaginative treatment, in 'The Picture of Little T.C. in a Prospect of Flowers' (pp. 38-9). The greater richness is the result of invoking once more the pastoral tradition, and of merging with it a number of other genres and conventional topics. The first stanza makes explicit the idea suggested in 'The Unfortunate Lover', that the real validity of the Golden Age myth is as an image of the innocence of childhood. The choice of the word "Nymph" to describe the little girl ensures that the poem is read with pastoral associations partly shaping our response, and the phrase "golden daies" forces the identification between the period of infancy and the historical and literary myth of the pastoral world. The picture of Little T.C. lying "in the green Grass" establishes her close relationship with nature - the adjective here being open-ended, allowing various connotations of naturalness, hope, and innocence to attach themselves to both the child and her setting. The remark that she gives the wild flowers names causes an expansion of the pastoral to take in the Christian concept of that other Golden Age in the Garden of Eden, since one of the privileges

granted to the First Man in his innocence was that of giving "names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field".³⁷ The picture of the child playing "only with the Roses" is charming in itself, but it takes on a more serious import once the metaphoric value of the roses is recognized. The rose was frequently symbolic of love, of modesty, of beauty which must fade.³⁸ All of these are relevant here, but especially the last: it is the flower whose "root is ever in its grave". The theme of transience, of the constant threat of death, emerges later as one of the main themes of the poem, and it has already been covertly intimated in the phrase "begins her golden daies". T.C. is just entering on a beautiful and innocent phase of her existence - but it will have an end as well as a beginning. This poem, like so many of Marvell's works, is shot through with an awareness of time, and the primary function of the rose image is to contribute to the sense of the child's fragility in the face of time. Time-consciousness is a consequence of the Fall of Man, and it is significant that Milton continually associates the life of Adam and Eve in Eden with roses.³⁹

The time theme begins to develop more openly in the next stanza, where the poet looks forward to the future, asking "who can foretel" what her lot in life will be? The answer is that she is one "whose chaster Laws/The wanton Love shall one day fear". The future tense is important, since it underlines the fact that her "golden daies" will not last. And "the wanton Love" sets future experience against present innocence: it contrasts with "the Infant Love" of 'The

Unfortunate Lover'. Under the "command severe" of this future "virtuous Enemy of Man", the bow of the wanton god will be broken. Love is envisaged as a foe who will spoil the early innocence, and disrupt the idyllic relationship with nature, like Juliana in the Mower poems. The maintenance of virtue in the world of experience beyond the flower-garden is seen as a battle.

In stanza three, the poet prays that he may "in time compound" with her "conquering Eyes", "Ere they have try'd their force to wound". In the lovely picture of Little T.C. playing with the flowers, there is already latent the cruel possibility - even certainty - of other kinds of experience. The stanza ends:-

Let me be laid,
Where I may see thy Glories from some shade.

Both Bradbrook and Lloyd Thomas and Ruth Wallerstein see in this reference to shade an intimation of death. Miss Wallerstein argues that the image has a precise and delimited meaning, deriving from the classical contrast "between the glories of our blood and state on the one hand and the grave on the other".⁴⁰ While accepting this, I would suggest that the image also has pastoral connotations: it is partly the "umbra" of Virgil, the shade in which one lies at ease in the timeless domain of the shepherd, safe from the trials of life beyond. Marvell is indulging in the comforting pretence - a conscious, and therefore moving pretence, like that of 'Young Love' - that in contemplating the child's simple oblivion to time and experience he can share momentarily in her freedom from their shackles.

Stanza four brings the poem back to the present, but once again the natural details force unpleasant realities upon us. "Mean time" reminds us yet again that this is a passing phase. The reforms that are recommended are charmingly fanciful, but are underlined by sadness: they are only fancies. The imperfections of the real world cannot be remedied. The tulips must remain incomplete, not fully satisfying; the roses - here they are primarily the symbol of beauty and love - will retain their capacity to hurt; and the violets will die young, like little Theophila Cornewall's elder sister.

In the last stanza the fears that have only found metaphoric intimation in the natural images are made explicit. "Nature courts" the child, as in so many of the poems of the period founded on the "pastoral hyperbole", but she is not only beneficent: her pastoral representative, Flora, can destroy as well as serve. The last line of the poem, because of the context which Marvell has built up through the preceding stanzas, is perhaps the most moving instance of the traditional image of beauty nipped in the bud in the entire range of seventeenth-century poetry. The line "gather the Flow'rs, but spare the buds" condenses into one rich metaphor a paradox which runs throughout this poem, and throughout Marvell's work. We have seen numerous examples of T.C.'s power over nature: she "tames/The Wilder flow'rs"; she breaks the bow of Love; she rides "In Triumph over Hearts that strive". But we have been kept constantly aware of nature's power over her. This is the great paradox of man: he has been given dominion over the Creation,⁴¹ but he is himself a part of

that Creation, and must submit to the laws of time and change and decay which have governed it since the Fall. So in exercising his power - the power of Art - he must respect Nature. Little T.C. may "Gather the Flow'rs", as Clora did "To crown her Head, and Bosome fill", but she must "spare the Buds". She must not presume too much on her prerogative, or she will harm herself as a part of nature.

This poem illustrates, as well as any in the Marvell canon, the poet's ability to combine sensuous, pictorial immediacy with the peculiar resonance that comes from the exploitation of conventional images and themes. In Leishman's words, it "seems to inherit and renew whole centuries of poetic tradition and achievement", while remaining throughout exactly what its title proclaims it - a "Picture".⁴²

In 'Little T.C.' experience is an impending threat casting a shadow over innocence; in 'The Nymph complaining for the death of her Faun' (pp. 22-4) Marvell explores the consequences of the first impingement of experience on the pastoral world of childhood. The strategy of the piece involves a deliberate collision of the pastoral world, signalled by the word "Nymph" applied to the speaker, and the name of her lover, Sylvio, with the world of contemporary reality, implied by the reference to "wanton Troopers". The simplicity and confusion of this "young beauty of the Woods", whose "golden daies" have been violated by the intrusion of adult experience, are clearly evident in the naive syntax and in the uncomprehending horror at what has happened. The "ungentle men" and the "unconstant Sylvio" are set in contrast to the Nymph who "cannot be/Unkind" to an innocent

creature that loves her. Perhaps Marvell means us to pick up these three negatives, and recognize that gentleness, constancy, and kindness (naturalness?) belong to the woodland idyll that has been destroyed. The two sorts of love that we have discovered in the other poems - "Infant Love" and "wanton Love" - confront each other in the bitterness of the couplet:-

Thy Love was far more better then
The love of false and cruel men,
(ll. 53-4)

The faun itself comes to embody both these loves. The process begins with the early puns - "Hath taught a Faun to hunt his Dear" and "Left me his Faun, but took his Heart" - which associate the spheres of pastoral and gallantry. And it reaches a climax in the flower references of "Lillies without, Roses within", where the same creature combines within itself the roses of latently passionate love and the lilies of chastity. These flowers belong to the pattern of imagery associated with the Song of Songs, the sensuous love poem of Solomon. The garden where they grow (ll. 71-6) must be read partly in the context of the hortus conclusus literature which evolved around this Biblical text.⁴³ The garden is both literal and metaphoric, the external setting and the internal being of the girl.⁴⁴ It is "a little Wilderness" - in a wild and therefore natural state; but in it grow the roses, with all the associations discussed in the analysis of 'Little T.C.', and the lilies, which are associated with death as well as with chastity. One couplet is especially significant:-

And all the Spring time of the year
It onely loved to be there.

The faun played in the literal and metaphoric gardens "all the Spring time of the year". But like the "Summers night" of 'The Unfortunate Lover', no season can last forever, and the onward march of time must bring with it disillusion and death. The faun, and the innocence implied by its whiteness, can only continue to exist in a realm outside time, so the Nymph prepares to escape from the world of experience with which she cannot cope to a "fair Elizium" peopled by other innocent creatures, "Swans and Turtles", "milk-white Lambs, and Ermins pure".

4. The Shepherd's Conversion: 'A Dialogue between Thyrsis and Dorinda' and 'Clorinda and Damon'.

'A Dialogue between Thyrsis and Dorinda' is built around another account of Elizium. This is a pastoral poem, but one which belongs not to the erotic tradition, but to the religious allegorical tradition stemming from Virgil's Fourth Eclogue. The conjunction of shepherd imagery in the Scriptures and in the pastoral, which allowed Milton to speak of Christ as Pan and the priests of 'Lycidas' as minders of sheep, allows Marvell here to describe Heaven as a natural paradise:-

There, sheep are full
Of sweetest grass, and softest wooll;
There, birds sing Consorts, garlands grow,
Cool winds do whisper, springs do flow.
There, alwayes is, a rising Sun,
And day is ever, but begun.
Shepherds there, bear equal sway,
And every Nymph's a Queen of May.

(p. 20)

This natural paradise produces the effects of Art without the intervention of human skill. The birds "sing Consorts", rather than wild unco-ordinated songs; "garlands grow" ready-made, thus obviating the need to despoil the fields of their flowers. Earlier, Thyrsis had described how even the shepherds' pastoral music is replaced by a more natural harmony:-

No Cat-pipe's needfull, there thine Ears
May feast with Musick of the Spheres.

There is no human rivalry - all the shepherds "bear equal sway" and each shepherdess is "a Queen of May". And most importantly of all, there is no time: day never ends, the sun is always rising.

There is something peculiarly simple-minded about this vision of life after death, but the strategy of the poem is far from simple. Marvell is once again exploiting the pastoral tradition, using it as a means of commenting on more complex experience. For the sophisticated poets of the seventeenth century, the realm of Arcady provided an escape into a happier and simpler existence. But in Marvell's poem, the inhabitants of that realm are themselves dissatisfied, and yearn for escape into yet a further pastoral retreat. This is surely the point of the extraordinary conclusion, in which the two speakers join in an agreement to drink drugged wine and "smoothly pass away in sleep".

In 'Clorinda and Damon' the simple-minded religious escapism of 'Thyrsis and Dorinda' gives place to a much tougher and consciously held religious conviction, reminiscent of 'A Dialogue between the Resolved Soul, and Created Pleasure'. The poem relies entirely on

the manipulation of natural imagery derived from pastoral, and is one of the finest examples of Marvell's practice of inverting a traditional genre. In form and procedure it is a temptation poem, an invitation to love, like Donne's 'The Bait' and Marlowe's 'The Passionate Shepherd to his Love'. But, as Friedman points out, it begins disconcertingly with the shepherdess rather than the shepherd making the advances.⁴⁵ The tone and terseness of Damon's replies sets up an immediate opposition between two quite different scales of value:-

- C. Damon come drive thy flocks this way.
- D. No: 'tis too late they went astray.
- C. I have a grassy Scutcheon spy'd,
Where Flora blazons all her pride.
The Grass I aim to feast thy Sheep:
The Flow'rs I for thy Temples keep.
- D. Grass withers; and the Flow'rs too fade.
(p. 18)

According to the pastoral ethic, the natural instincts are good, and the grass and flowers of nature's representative, Flora, are associated with the satisfaction of those instincts - Ametas and Thestylis end by kissing "within the Hay", Clora crowns her head and fills her bosom with flowers. Damon, as a newly converted Christian, rejects the indulgence of natural instincts in favour of a higher ethic, and interprets the natural details in the light of an ascetic contemptus mundi. Grass withers and flowers fade, reminding him that all flesh is grass and beauty is transient. These facts could be used in a carpe diem argument, but Damon uses them to direct attention to the more important life of the spirit.

Clorinda insists on the carpe diem interpretation, and turns to other features of the landscape (ll. 8-12). The cave is a place of physical fulfillment, like the cave where Aeneas and Dido consummated their love. It has the enticing quality of coolness, which pastoral figures find so often in the shadows of trees or by fountains, and which symbolizes an escape from the heat of the sun of everyday reality. Damon's rejection of the retreat as "Virtue's Grave" is a startling inversion of the image used in 'To his Coy Mistress'.

Friedman comments perceptively:-

There [in the conventional carpe diem argument] the image of beauty lying unenjoyed in a grave would be the most compelling exhortation to indulgence. Here the death of virtue is imagined as the active enjoyment of physical lust and beauty.⁴⁶

Damon goes on to insist that the sun is not to be taken in a materialistic sense as the source of uncomfortable heat, but in the Christian sense as the source of spiritual light and the symbol of Godhead. Like Thyrsis, he rejoices in "Everlasting day" and a sun that is always rising.

Clorinda offers another pastoral enticement, which is again shown to be inadequate and in need of reinterpretation in Christian terms (ll. 13-16). The "Fountains cool" must become the waters of life, cleansing and sustaining the spirit. She is bewildered by this persistent denial of her normal way of experiencing nature, and is at last brought to join Damon in his new way of looking. Man - the conventional title of Christ in religious pastoral - replaces the sensuously attractive Flora as the governor of the natural world. In the final Chorus, the "Pastures, Caves, and Springs", which were once

"enticing things" appealing to the body, become part of the great revelation of God in the Book of Nature: "For all the World is our Pan's Quire".

By bringing to bear a different ethic and a different tradition of symbolism on the attitudes and imagery of the erotic pastoral, Marvell has once more been able to "examine the myriad ways in which words and symbols represent or fail to represent the ideas they were meant to express".⁴⁷

5. Religious Allegory and Emblem: 'The Coronet', 'On a Drop of Dew', and 'Bermudas'.

'The Coronet' is the offering of a converted Damon, whose songs and "slender Oate" are now devoted to the higher service of God. Friedman suggests that this kind of palinode - "the farewell to secular (or, more particularly, pastoral) poetry" - almost attained the status of a genre in itself. He cites Donne's first Corona sonnet, Spenser's October Eclogue, "one of the possible interpretations of the last line of 'Lycidas'", and the two Jordan poems of George Herbert.⁴⁸ Another poem which includes an idea similar to 'The Coronet', and which is much closer to it in its tight metaphoric structure, is Vaughan's 'Unprofitableness'. Vaughan begins by describing the way his soul flourishes anew at the return of God's grace, but his joy turns to ashes when he considers his own unworthiness:-

But, ah, my God! what fruit hast thou of this?
 What one poor leaf did ever I yet fall
 To wait upon thy wreath?⁴⁹

Just as Marvell maintains his natural metaphor - "my fruits are only flow'rs"⁵⁰ - throughout the poem, so Vaughan's expression is completely confined within his image of the soul as a plant. There is no need to provide any external aids to interpretation, since the whole burden of meaning is adequately carried by the natural details. In Vaughan's poem, the metaphor is derived from the tradition of plant imagery developed by devotional poets from Herbert's work; in Marvell's, the metaphors derive from pastoral, with infusions of Biblical allusion.

The poet seeks to replace the thorny wreath of sin, with which he has wounded the head of Christ in his secular verse, by weaving new "Garlands" of praise. The flowers from which these garlands will be made are the same flowers he used in his love songs:-

Dismantling all the fragrant Towers
That once adorn'd my Shepherdesses head.
(p. 14)

This is quite possible, since, as we saw in 'Clorinda and Damon', it is not the details from nature that are in themselves significant of bodily or spiritual love, but the use to which they are put. The converted shepherd finds, however, that even the apparently straightforward task of praising God through one's art is as complex as all other human experience. The serpent, who winds about the flowers "With wreaths of Fame and Interest", needs no explanation, nor is he out of place in the metaphoric pattern of the poem. He inhabits the pastoral world quite as naturally as he inhabits the Biblical Garden, and the mere fact of his continual presence is one of the reasons why no experience can be as simple as it looks. The co-existence of

good and evil is one of the fundamental complexities of life.

The concrete and the abstract are both vitally present from the first introduction of the serpent, "twining in his speckled breast", and throughout the succeeding invocation:-

But thou who only could'st the Serpent tame,
 Either his slipp'ry knots at once untie,
 And disentangle all his winding Snare:
 Or shatter too with him my curious frame.

The usual account of the relationship between vehicle and tenor in metaphor hardly seems to be appropriate to this poem; nor can it quite be regarded as an allegory, since the meaning does not have to be read into the imagery. The natural details and the spiritual substance seem to proceed side by side, or as parts of each other, both being simultaneously accessible. The poem is a triumph of Marvell's handling of sensuous detail and of his exploitation of traditional pastoral and Biblical symbolism.

Another poem which achieves a similar fusion of the physical with the conceptual is 'On a Drop of Dew' (pp. 12-13). This draws on a number of different genres, transmuting them into a unique poetic form, ultimately unlike anything else in seventeenth-century poetry. Leishman suggests only Vaughan's 'The Water-fall' as having any "really striking resemblance" to it, but admits that Marvell's poem is "far more of a unity than Vaughan's", because it is "essentially descriptive throughout".⁵¹ The similarity to 'The Water-fall' is largely due to the fact that both poems are modelled on the emblem. They both begin with a description of a natural phenomenon, and then go on to draw from the details of the description moral and spiritual

lessons or truths. Structurally, Marvell's poem does fall into two parts, like an emblem: the first eighteen lines, governed by the command "See", describe the drop of dew; the next eighteen lines, governed by "So the Soul", apply the description to the human spirit; and the last four lines round the poem off. But, as Leishman says, its poetic method is "essentially descriptive throughout"; and more than that, it is essentially conceptual throughout as well.⁵² The first eighteen lines are shot through with moral and psychological implications; the second eighteen are alive with physical immediacy.

The poem opens with a picture of the dew on the flowers (ll.1-8). Friedman pertinently reminds us that the phrase "Into the blowing Roses" invokes "the universal symbol for the most perfect state of earthly beauty", and ensures that we remember "that the moment of its perfection is also the moment before the onset of decay".⁵³ The description of the drop of dew is precise: it maintains its spherical shape even when resting on the petals of the rose. But already in this initial picture the symbolic value of the dew is hinted at. It does not belong to its environment, "its Mansion new"; its real home is its birthplace in "the clear Region" of the skies - that region which the "Meteors of a Summers night" cannot climb to, because, like the "blowing Roses" and the "dull sublunary lovers" of this earth, they are bound by the laws of time and mortality. The dew's aim is to preserve its eternal qualities, turning away from the material surroundings and framing "as it can its native element".

The rest of the first section continues this technique of

simultaneous description and interpretation (ll. 9-18). The verb of line 9 - "How it the purple flow'r does slight" - suggests a psychological reaction by the drop of dew: it slights its host flower; but this is immediately shown to be an accurate description of its physical relationship to the petals - being spherical, it is scarcely in contact with them. The next few lines exploit a favourite conceit of the metaphysical poets. Because the dewdrop is round it is like an eye, so that it can be said to be "gazing"; and this leads naturally to the idea that it is a tear, dropped from its own eye, and dropped also from the greater "Sphear" of the "clear Region" of the arching heavens. The words "restless" and "trembling" relate to both halves of the emblem: they are physically descriptive and expressive of the soul's fear of growing impure during its earthly sojourn. The "warm Sun" is capable of "pitty" because it is the symbol of Godhead, and it can "exhale" the dew back to the sky because it is the sun of the material universe.

The second section takes the soul as its grammatical subject, but conceives of it in physical terms appropriate to the drop of dew (ll. 19-26). As the dew slighted the rose, so the soul "shuns" the leaves and blossoms - the material elements of the "humane flow'r". "Recollecting" implies both remembering and gathering within itself, as a lens concentrates the rays of light which strike it. The reference to the soul expressing "The greater Heaven in an Heaven less" harks back to the "little Globe" and the "Sphear" of the earlier physical conceits, and applies just as aptly to the dew's property

of reflecting its surroundings.

The emblematic interpretation continues:-

So the World excluding round,
Yet receiving in the Day.

Both the "World" and the "Day" exist on two planes. The world is the material environment, shut out by the dew's sphere; and it is the metaphoric world, flesh, and devil which threatens the soul's integrity. The day is the literal light which is absorbed by the dewdrop; and it is the metaphoric light of spiritual illumination and purity. The next two lines reverse the process of two earlier lines. The soul is "Dark beneath, but bright above": this is a physical description more appropriate to the dew than the soul. Then the description is given its symbolic value: "Here disdaining, there in Love". In the first section of the poem, the symbolic idea of the dew slighting the flower was immediately provided with its material justification: "Scarce touching where it lyes". Marvell, by manipulating the technical devices of rhetoric, is breaking down the expected literary distinctions between the vehicle and tenor of metaphor, as he does in the simile discussed earlier from 'Damon the Mower'.

In the concluding section of the poem, dewdrop and soul are identified in the further image of "the Manna's sacred Dew" (ll.37-40). On earth, the soul is "congeal'd and chill" - restricted by its material habitation, as the Soul had complained in its dialogue with the Body. But if it remains "resolved" in the face of worldly temptation, it will at last be dissolved, loosed from the "Chains/Of

Nerves, and Arteries, and Veins", and taken back to the clear region where dwells "th'Almighty Sun", who governs the lesser sun of the material universe.

Although the basic procedure of this poem is a sophistication of the technique of the emblem books, other genres are also exploited. Toliver points out that there is an inversion of the carpe diem tradition, in that the poet is arguing against the indulgence of the senses, while using the very images - dew and flowers - which are usually associated with that tradition. The elegiac tradition, in which the poet "offers consolation for our having to lose contact with nature", is also drawn upon in a totally unexpected way:-

Marvell simply distills the elegy's mode of consolation, freeing it from its implication in nature and making it seem the logical product of a contemptus mundi motive. In terms of imagery, he exploits the vehicle while denying its importance . . . Life is too long rather than too short; the theme is memento vitae rather than memento mori.⁵⁴

The success of this poem, as so often in Marvell's work, depends on the manipulation of our responses to natural imagery as it has been used in previous literature.

'On a Drop of Dew' and 'Thyrsis and Dorinda' look forward to an escape from the problems of this life in an Elizium which is only entered after death. The oarsmen of 'Bermudas' (pp. 17-18) find their paradise on the material earth. Far from the political "storms" of Europe and the "Prelat's rage" of religious intolerance, they rejoice in the "eternal Spring" of a New World which seems to translate into reality the impossible visions of the pastoral ideal.⁵⁵ Just as

"garlands" had grown on trees and the birds had sung "Consorts" in Thyrsis's account of the shepherds' heaven, so in this isle "far kinder than our own" a bounteous nature provides all the necessities furnished by art in a less "kind" or "natural" environment. The description of the islands is governed by this paradoxical conceit of the art of nature. The God of nature lands the emigrants "on a grassy Stage", "enamells every thing", sends birds "on daily visits", frames "a Temple" in the rocks, encloses "Jewels more rich than Ormus show's" in the pomegranate. The conventional hyperbole by which nature "throws the Melons at our feet" and showers man with gifts, and the well-worn cliché of nature-as-art,⁵⁶ are here imbued with a new vitality. The whole purpose of the account of the Bermudas is not to describe them, but to express the close relationship between God and men which can be seen in the way the natural world is arranged to serve their needs. Bradbrook and Lloyd Thomas have noted that the poem derives its inspiration partly from Psalm 104 and from the Benedicite,⁵⁷ where God is praised as Creator and Provider, as in these verses from the psalm:-

He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man: that he may bring forth food out of the earth; And wine that maketh glad the heart of man, and oil to make his face to shine, and bread which strengtheneth man's heart. The trees of the LORD are full of sap; the cedars of Lebanon, which he hath planted. (verses 14-16)

William H. Halewood draws attention also to Psalms 147, 65, and 78, and comments that, "The God of Psalms is not merely a loving God, but one who loves miraculously, transforming Nature's ordinary appearances

and operations into the efficient vehicles of his benevolence."⁵⁸ The famous simile of the oranges, "Like golden Lamps in a green Night", gains its primary significance from this context. The visual beauty of the image of "golden Lamps" may be an important part of the poem's effect, but it is not the most important aspect. It is as if the poet, rather than searching for a simile to express a visual experience, had been led to the visual experience by a developing train of imagery. The oranges get into the poem because they are "like . . . Lamps" hung there by God. They are an example of God's beneficent art, not primarily an example of natural beauty.

Like other natural paradises, this one reminds the poet of the first paradise:-⁵⁹

But Apples plants of such a price,
No Tree could ever bear them twice.

These are literally pineapples,⁶⁰ but the poet's phrasing forces an allusion to the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge. Natural details rarely enter Marvell's poetry without being absorbed into some scheme of significance which transforms them into symbols bridging the gulf between the physical and the conceptual. Toliver puts it another way, seeing 'Bermudas' as a poem which demonstrates "that a classical concern with nature-as-such and the Christian book of emblems are not entirely incompatible".⁶¹

6. Thoughts more Green: The Mower Poems.

Of all Marvell's poems, the four developed around the figure of the Mower provide his most sustained treatment of the human dilemma

and his most profound probing into the significance of the pastoral myth. The Mower has excited numerous attempts at explanation. At his simplest, he is what Bradbrook and Lloyd Thomas call "a special variant of the stock Swain, more English and also more of a person".⁶² He has been variously described as "the first upright soul out of Paradise", "Marvell's symbol of fallen man, the lowest of the angels and the highest of the beasts", "the Clown as Death", a symbol of "man's alienation from nature", a "post-lapsarian worker" and "pastoral parvenue".⁶³ Edward Tayler suggests that Marvell has created something highly unusual in these poems. He is puzzled by the poet's violation of normal pastoral conventions, and argues that "the significance of the Mower would have been clear to Fairfax's circle at Appleton House", and that the meaning of his departure from literary orthodoxy "can be appreciated fully only in the context of the other Mower poems, only as we compare context with context in order to make private meanings public".⁶⁴ To some extent this is true. The Mower poems need to be read as a group, and to be seen in relation to some of Marvell's other poems which explore the implications of pastoral. But in the end their meaning can be seen to derive from public literary traditions, not from the private symbolism of a coterie; and that meaning is found to reside largely in the Mower's relationship to the details of nature.

One way of approaching these poems is to regard them as part of a process examined in Renato Poggioli's article, 'The Pastoral of Self':-

One of the tasks of European seventeenth-century literature was to . . . liberate the pastoral from that excessive or exclusive concern with passion and sex which had shaped the bucolic vision of the Italians. The writers of that age succeeded in doing so first by taking up its neglected variants, such as the pastorals of melancholy and solitude, which they developed in either contact or contrast with the Italian example; and then by creating a novel variant, such as the pastoral of the self, which in the end transcended all previous traditions of the genre.⁶⁵

Poggioli examines only 'The Garden' among Marvell's works, but it can be argued that it is in the Mower poems that the use of pastoral as a medium for self-analysis is at its most interesting. Self-analysis depends upon objectivity, and Barbara Everett is surely right in seeing the Mower as the fruit of that detachment which is the key to Marvell's ironic seriousness of tone.⁶⁶ The Mower is basically a pastoral figure, who becomes uneasily aware that pastoral assumptions do not match the facts of experience, and whose reactions force into the open some of the fundamental dilemmas of seventeenth-century man. He is comic because he does not understand what is happening to him, and because his reactions seem grotesquely simple-minded. He is tragic because his suffering is genuine, and because the problems that beset him are inherent in the human situation and perhaps insoluble.

In 'The Mower against Gardens' (pp. 40-1) the Mower sees himself firmly established in a pastoral context, acting as the spokesman for a nature that he understands. The first thirty lines describe the art of gardening as a process of seducing and depraving the creatures of the fields, "Where Nature was most plain and pure". The Fall of Man is seen exclusively in sexual terms, and so his dominion over

the rest of nature also takes this form. Two parallel oppositions are set up: innocence and sexual licence; and nature and art. The last ten lines comment on the enormities that man's skill has perpetrated against natural simplicity. The "Fountain and the Grot" are the artificially constructed counterparts of the springs and caves of the pastoral landscape. "Willing Nature", like the bountiful God of 'Bermudas', pours out her gifts freely, especially that of Innocence which is essentially "wild", that is, natural and unsophisticated. The ministers of Nature, the "Fauns and Faryes", achieve the necessary results of art - tilling the meadows - without the intervention of "skill", which implies the mastery of one thing by another. Polished statues of these deities ornament the gardens of art,⁶⁷ but the Mower dismisses these despite their beauty - however much they "do excel" - in favour of the presence of the "Gods themselves".

Leishman and Kermode⁶⁸ have placed 'The Mower against Gardens' in a long tradition of Art-Nature debates and anti-garden literature, but as usual Marvell is not simply following in the footsteps of his predecessors. The poem is "the Mower" against gardens, not Marvell against gardens - a point not always recognized by the critics, who sometimes complain that the poet is being inconsistent in his attack on the very Garden that he extols in another piece. There is a latent irony in the idea of a Mower - whose job is to destroy the plants of the fields - objecting to the domination of nature by art. The Mower is unaware of this irony; he makes a distinction between "Luxurious Man", who entices the rest of nature to share in his Fall,

and the pastoral characters who comprise the "us" of the last line. But no man can set himself apart from the conditions that govern the lives of other men. The Mower cannot dissociate himself from the consequences of the Fall from Innocence. The pastoral myth avoids some of the pressing issues of real life.

Except in the extravagance of the attack on horticulture (which is almost absurd in its vehemence at times), the incongruity of the Mower's position is not made explicit in this first poem. But in 'Damon the Mower' (pp. 41-4), the potential comedy and tragedy emerge. The poem begins with a stanza which sets the scene for the monologue of Damon. Marvell insists on the reader recognizing the dramatic and literary qualities of the ensuing poem: the "Scene" is painted (though, of course, this scenery is not the artificial set of a theatre, it is nature itself), and is appropriate for "his complaint" - a technical word for a particular kind of love lament. The pathetic fallacy is then introduced: the natural surroundings respond to the grief of the lover. But Marvell appears intent upon exposing the "fallacy" of this rhetorical commonplace. (The "seem" of line three is not accidental.) The confusion of vehicle and tenor previously noted in the last couplet, the implications of the imagery of art and theatre, and the general tone of ironic amusement - for example, in the flippancy of the word "stung" and the melodramatic cadence and repetition of "Like her fair Eyes the day was fair" - all combine to emphasise the ridiculous extravagance of Damon and the pastoral convention that is being invoked. He is overdramatizing himself in the

following monologue.

He begins by concentrating on "his am'rous Care", and his relationship with Juliana (ll. 9-40). The natural details of stanza II seem to call out for interpretation, especially since the "But" which begins line thirteen indicates a significant contrast. Clearly something out of the ordinary - either in reality or in Damon's imagination - is taking place. It is natural for the meadows to be sun-burned, but unnatural for them to be seared. The "unusual Heats" have some special value within the poem. The heats and the other details in the stanza can be placed partly by a quotation from Virgil's Second Eclogue:-

'O crudelis Alexi, nihil mea carmina curas?
 nil nostri miserere? mori me denique coges.
 nunc etiam pecudes umbras et frigora captant,
 nunc virides etiam occultant spineta lacertos,
 Thestylis et rapido fessis messoribus aestu
 alia serpullumque herbas contundit olentes.
 at mecum raucis, tua dum vestigia lustras,
 sole sub ardenti resonant arbusta cicadis.
 (ll. 6-13)

There are striking similarities: the reapers (mowers?) are wearied by the scorching heat; the cicadas sing; the cattle "seek out the shades"; the green lizard escapes the heat in his thorny brake, as the green frog does in the brook; and the speaker in each case suffers from the hardness of a pitiless lover, "sole sub ardenti". Marvell takes the pastoral imagery further, however, and mingles it with the conventional hot-cold paradoxes of the Petrarchan love lyric. The "scorching beams" of Juliana's "higher Beauty" burn "the Fields and Mower both". There is an interesting discrepancy between the

narrator's and the Mower's version of the situation. In stanza I, the poet tells us that it is the Mower's "am'rous Care" which is "scorching". In other words, the lover's own passion is the source of the heat. Damon insists - following the literary conventions - that Juliana is the cause of the unnatural "Extremes", and that the fields suffer with him. If we now go back to the natural details of stanza II, we can see that Damon is using them to objectify his own dilemma. Burnt by his own passion, he can no longer follow his pastoral occupations of piping and dancing. These are the occupations of innocence, which are forfeited with the onset of experience. Damon has become a "Luxurious Man", and is spreading the consequences of his fall from innocence to the creatures of nature - the grasshoppers and frogs. These creatures can escape back into nature: the grasshoppers "seek out the shades", where they are safe from the heat and can resume their song; the "green Frog", green in its innocence and naturalness, can still wade in the brook. But Damon, recognizing now the conjunction between "the hot day" and "hot desires", can no longer retire to the "cool Cave" and "gelid Fount^hain" of the pastoral haven. These objective retreats have been metamorphosed by his subjective obsession into the lover's tears and the coldness of Juliana's "Icy Breast". The pastoral myth represents an idyllic escape from experience, which cannot accommodate the realities of passion. It is a fallacy for fallen man - that is, for man as we know him in all his complexity - to think that nature feels for and with him. If the fields and grasshoppers and frogs suffer from the

heat, it is the heat of the sun, not the "am'rous Care" of Damon or the "scorching beams" of Juliana. Only man in his presumption - the presumption which leads him to seduce the plants of the garden - could think otherwise.

There is still one detail from stanza II left unexplained: the "Snake, that kept within". It may be simply another example of the escape open to the creatures of nature, as Toliver suggests: "the snake has a second skin; the Mower's "heat" is inner and hence beyond retreat or rebirth".⁶⁹ Or it may have more subtle connotations, as Friedman argues:-

The snake stands not only for duplicity and conscious evil, but here also for the same cold detachment Juliana displays; and in its 'second skin' there is a hint of the hypocrisy that defends itself against the frank emotions of nature.⁷⁰

It seems more likely, in the light of the interpretation offered above, that the snake is a sexual allusion.⁷¹ Just as the piping grasshoppers and dancing frogs represent features of Damon's lost life of innocence, so the snake emerging in "its second skin" represents an element of his fallen experience. This phallic allusion may be continued in stanza III, where Damon laments that "This heat [i.e. passion] the Sun could never raise"; and the strange notion that the "Dog" is made "hotter" than Phaeton may imply a pun on "heat".⁷²

The expression of Damon's "experience" is restricted by the pastoral-Petrarchan strategy of the poem to the sphere of sexual relations. But an interesting article by Peter L. Smith, 'Lentus in Umbra: A Symbolic Pattern in Vergil's Eclogues', may allow us to

read Marvell's poem as an exploration of much wider issues. Smith argues that in the contrast of Tityrus and Meliboeus - the happy rustic and the farmer dispossessed by Roman politics - Virgil establishes a basic symbolic contrast between "cool, shaded repose" and the "hot, dusty world of homeless yearning". He goes on:-

Libertas is symbolically opposed to servitium; peace, to civil discord. The underlying basis for this contrast is the recurring suggestion that leisure, relaxation, freedom, and peace are all to be found in the shade, whereas exile, anxiety, slavery, and discord are exposed to the pitiless glare of the sun. . . . Like the lovesick Corydon of Eclogue 2, who is there the only living creature forced to endure the blazing midday sun (Ecl. 2. 8-13), Meliboeus seems to feel that the unattainable shade would soothe his restlessness and torment.⁷³

A.J.N. Wilson has recently discussed the relevance of developments of this shade imagery in Roman literature for a reading of 'An Horatian Ode',⁷⁴ and it seems reasonable to apply it also to 'Damon the Mower' which manifestly borrows some of its details from Virgil's pastorals. Marvell lived through a period of discord very similar to Virgil's, and it is surely probable that his preoccupation with innocence and experience was not confined to the areas of sex and nature. Damon's plight is symbolic of the plight of the individual in mid-seventeenth-century England, exposed to the "blazing midday sun" of political and religious revolution, wandering dispossessed of traditional certainties in the "hot, dusty world of homeless yearning". Marvell is exploiting the symbolism inherent in the pastoral genre as "a way of bringing to focus other kinds of experience".

Stanza V of 'Damon the Mower' describes the gifts rejected by Juliana: the "harmless Snake", the chamelcon, the oak leaves "tipt

with honey due". These simple pastoral offerings can have no effect in the realm of experience that Damon's passion has led him into, and each brings its own irony with it. The snake, "Disarmed of its teeth and sting", is a ridiculously inadequate gift coming from the passionate lover associated with the other snake of stanza II; the chameleon suggests the inconstancy and hypocrisy of a far from ideal world; the oak leaves, traditional symbol of victory in battle, are sweetened by honey in a vain attempt to mollify their associations with bloodshed. Juliana, who has been the occasion of Damon's transition from innocence to experience, will have nothing to do with them or the simple pastoral attitudes they seek to embody.

The poem now alters its course. From his relationship with Juliana, the Mower turns in bewilderment to an attempt to understand himself and what has happened to him (ll. 41-64). The opening assertion has an air of tragi-comic desperation about it, as the Mower tries to maintain his conception of himself and his place in nature, but in the second line he unwittingly acknowledges the limitations of his life:-

I am the Mower Damon, known
Through all the Meadows I have mown.

Once his relationship with the meadows is forfeited, he has no basis for self-assessment. The present tense of the verbs is a piece of self-deception: the Mower is trying to prolong a relationship with nature which is already firmly in the past. That relationship itself is revealed as a figment of his imagination. Each of the instances

he offers of nature's care for him can be explained in a rational, non-animistic way. The Morn does not single him out for special favours - he just happens to be there when the dew is being distilled upon the earth; the Sun does not lick off his sweat - he just happens to be warmed by the sun that "shines on all alike"; the cowslip-water does not actively bathe his feet - his own action of walking through the fields shakes the water from the flowers. He is imposing upon the inanimate surroundings his own sense of belonging and being cared for. The pathetic fallacy and the pastoral hyperbole are shown to be inventions of the human mind. By exposing the artificial aspects of these rhetorical figures, Marvell is obliquely expressing the fundamental change that was coming over contemporary attitudes to nature.⁷⁵

In stanza VII, Damon strives to place himself in the pastoral order of things. He not only belongs to the idyllic Arcadia, he is even better off than the shepherd. The fleece which rewards his labour is not mere wool, it is a "golden fleece" shorn from the ripened meadows. The mention of gold puts us in mind of the Golden Age that he is trying to salvage for himself. But his boast about the tool of his trade contains an irony which he does not perceive: the scythe "discovers wide/More ground then all his Sheep do hide". It is an instrument of discovery, as well as one for uncovering the earth,⁷⁶ but the discovery of the realities of experience will take away the innocent oblivion of the pastoral life. It is this scythe which, later, becomes literally his downfall.

Stanza VII begins with another allusion to Virgil's Second Eclogue:-

nec sum adeo informis: nuper me in litore vidi,
cum placidum ventis staret mare.

(11: 25-6)

The initial impact of the picture of Damon peering at his reflection in the blade of his scythe is grotesque and comic. But regarded another way, the picture verges on the tragic. He is vainly trying to vindicate his claim "I am the Mower Damon", trying to see just what he is like. But the scythe which "discovers" so much in stanza VI can only give him a poor, incomplete understanding of himself - no more than a crescent moon can tell about the appearance of the sun. The last four lines of the stanza show Damon engaging in the two activities of dancing and singing which the heat of passion rendered impossible in the once innocent fields in stanza II. The "deathless Fairyes" are akin to the "Fauns and Faryes" of 'The Mower against Gardens'. The epithet is significant: the natural forces which the fairies represent are indeed "deathless", but death is to be a crucial part of Damon's new experience. The image of the last line - "About me they contract their Ring" - suggests both the fairy rings of the material meadows, and the ring which symbolizes the marriage contract. Damon is still vainly asserting the closeness of his relationship with nature.

But in the next stanza, he admits that he has been indulging a dream of the vanished past. The image of love as thistles perhaps looks back to the word of stanza I - "with love of Juliana stung!"⁷⁷ The rose of love has its thorns, the meadows of pastoral innocence

sprout hurtful thistles as a mark of the transition to experience. The scythe, the instrument of discovery, is also an instrument of destruction which cuts down the grass. (If all flesh is grass, and if the converse of this can be taken as implicit in the imaginative ambience of these poems, then Time and Death have arrived together upon the scene.) Knowledge is death, as it was for Adam and Eve. The last line - "Sighing I whet my Sythe and Woes" - seems to indicate a pun on sigh/sythe,⁷⁸ and we should perhaps be prepared to read back this reference to the sighs of the lover through the preceding stanzas, and especially to the last couplet of stanza I. The scythe, which has come to represent discovery and destruction, is also identified with "his Sorrow" - the sorrow of his passion. Grass and hopes are alike mown down by the complex experience embodied in this many-sided symbol. The "Iron" which "blunter grows" may be meant to call up the idea of the Age of Iron, which has succeeded the earlier and happier ages of Gold and Silver. It is the iron scythe that shears the "golden fleece" from the meadows of the pastoral idyll. (Marvell elsewhere associates iron with what is imperfect and hostile in this life. Fate drives "Iron wedges" between the hopeless lovers of 'The Definition of Love'; the lover tells his Coy Mistress that they must tear their "Pleasures with rough strife,/Thorough the Iron gates of Life".)

The poet then intervenes to describe the consequence of the Mower's disillusionment. The literal meaning of stanza X is comic,

but the phrasing and the symbolic undercurrent are profoundly serious. There is a disturbing abandon and brutality about the first four lines, captured with unerring poetic skill in the rhythm, the connotations of "depopulating", and the sound effects of "does cut/Each stroke between the Earth and Root". One can almost hear the blade slicing through the living substance of the grass. The mower falls, destroyed in the very act of destruction. The harmless dominion of Little T.C. and Clora over the plants is now revealed as potentially more sinister.

The poem ends on an even more resonant note. Both the Petrarchan and the pastoral visions are appealed to once more in stanza XI, and the literary nature of each is exposed by setting the rustic idyll and the metaphoric death of the lover's dart in the realistic context of death itself. Both genres are shown up as an oversimplification of the true facts of human experience.

In 'The Mower to the Glo-worms' (pp. 44-5), Damon still feels that nature is beneficent, and recognizes that the alienation he suffers is caused by something in himself. The "living Lamps" of the glow-worms, like the "golden Lamps" of 'Bermudas', are there to serve creatures like the Nightingale which retain their harmony with the environment. But for him, they are a "dear light" because they are lost to him. The term of affection is a mark of his sense of estrangement. "Wandering Mowers" straying after "foolish Fires" can still be directed back to the right path if they follow nature's signs. But the fires which Damon has pursued are metaphorical, and the darkness

he is lost in is a night of the mind. The "courteous Lights" of a sympathetic animistic universe cannot illuminate the mind disorientated by Juliana. Damon knows that he will never find his home, but he does not perceive that that home was a figment of his imagination, the product of a special way of looking at the universe.⁷⁹

In the last of this group of poems, 'The Mower's Song' (pp. 45-6), Damon begins to have some inkling of what has happened to him, as he recognizes some kind of distinction between "my Thoughts and Me". The irony is that he can still not take an objective view of nature. He still posits an animistic universe, capable of forming a relationship with man; but now nature has turned its back on him, and treats him with the cold indifference of a cruel mistress.

The traditional significance of green as the colour of hope is invoked in the first stanza, but it is placed vividly in a context of material nature. The greenness of the fresh and growing grass has associations with springtime - the season of new life and hope, of "gawdy May-games". When the Mower's mind was in harmony with its surroundings, and could take a "true survey" of its place in nature, the external and the internal facts corresponded - grass and hopes were identified. Even when things went wrong, the harmony continued, as stanza I of 'Damon the Mower' maintained: grass and hopes withered together. But the changed attitude of mind sees through the fallacy of natural sympathy. While the man pines with sorrow, the meadows continue to flourish, gaily adorning the grass with an abundance of flowers. The meadows have now foregone the "fellowship so true".

Again there is unperceived irony in Damon's choice of words: he intends "true" to mean "constant", as in "true love"; but the word picks up the "true" of the first stanza, and suggests to the detached reader that the fellowship was never true to the objective facts, but a projection of Damon's inward sense of well-being. There is a highly significant contrast to stanza V of 'Damon the Mower': there, Damon complained that it was Juliana who was "ungrateful"; now, he lays the blame for his suffering on the "Unthankful Meadows". In neither case does he understand that the real cause of the disruption lies in himself, in his own inability to prolong his innocent view of himself and his environment.

Reacting in an unsophisticated way to his new experience, he resorts to simple violence (stanza IV). He is now doing exactly what he charged "Luxurious Man" with in 'The Mower against Gardens'. Fallen man there viciously involved the rest of nature in his own ruin; so Damon wantonly asserts his power over the rest of creation by ensuring that his fall becomes "common".

In the final stanza, as happens elsewhere in Marvell's work, a contrast of tenses indicates the core of the meaning. The meadows "have been" closely identified with one phase of his existence, when his thoughts were "more green"; they "shall now" become the emblem of his death, and adorn his tomb. "More green" contains another ironic pun. Damon uses the adjective to suggest his earlier hope and closeness to nature; for the reader it suggests a meaning similar to Cleopatra's "My salad days, when I was green in judgment". Damon's

happy past depended on the greenness of inexperience. It is his consistent blindness to the full implications of what he is saying and doing that qualifies with comedy this developing tragedy of alienation.

The poem is not an allegory of the historical Fall; it manipulates genre and imagery to embody the idea basic to much of Marvell's poetry, that the journey from innocence to experience is a re-enactment in the life of each man of mankind's anomalous fate in the universe. Man is involved, in the words of Barbara Everett, "in a world of comic or tragic disharmony, where he is neither physical nor intellectual, neither animal nor angel".⁸⁰ Damon begins his career, like Little T.C., by being absorbed in, and defined by his relationship with, the physical; he ends by recognizing, but not being reconciled to, the fact that "my Thoughts and Me", intellect and instincts, mind and body, draw him in opposite directions. He cannot accept, as Sir Thomas Browne could, that man is "that great and true Amphibium, whose nature is disposed to live, not onely like other creatures in diverse elements, but in divided and distinguished worlds".⁸¹

7. Unenvy'd Greatness: 'Upon the Hill and Grove at Billborow'.

Nearly all the poems discussed so far have been concerned with the contradictions within the human creature, and with man's growing feeling of alienation between himself and his universe as he moves from innocence to experience. The last group of poems that require attention explore the possibility that man may be able to establish

both an internal harmony between the warring elements of his nature, and an external harmony between himself and his environment. The genre which offered a complex of symbols and a tradition of literary techniques which could be exploited for this purpose was the retirement poem.⁸² The handling of details from nature in 'Upon the Hill and Grove at Bill-borow', Upon Appleton House, and 'The Garden' is in one respect the very reverse of the handling of them in the poems based on the pastoral tradition. In 'The Unfortunate Lover', 'Little T.C.', and the Mower poems, Marvell demonstrates the inadequacy of the pastoral vision of life and the fallacy of natural sympathy by exposing the falsity of the tradition's fanciful use of natural details. T.C. cannot "reform the errours of the Spring"; the cowslips bathe the feet of Damon only in his subjective interpretation of reality; the "Fountains cool and Shadows green" of innocent love are no refuge from the heats of passion. But in the retirement poems, the poet who has come to terms with experience tries to reassert the validity of natural symbolism, as he seeks out a renewed relationship with the creatures of the countryside.

In 'Upon the Hill and Grove at Bill-borow' (pp. 56-8) Marvell argues objectively the virtues of retirement from the example of Lord Fairfax. (It is interesting to note that he translated the second Chorus from Seneca's Thyestes, which was one of the classical statements of the ideal of rural retirement, and a frequent subject for translation in the seventeenth-century.⁸³ And it is also worth remembering, lest we should be tempted to see Retirement as Marvell's

final answer to the problems of life, that 'An Horatian Ode' praises Cromwell, at least ostensibly, for leaving the shades and the "inglorious Arts of Peace".) Marvell's method in this poem is to interpret the natural setting in such a way that it seems to represent Fairfax, and to justify his decision to leave the arena of active politics. The first two stanzas contrast the "perfect Hemisphere" of Bill-borow with the rugged imperfections of "Mountains more unjust". The physical differences of obscure perfection and conspicuous deformity are emblematic of the life of retirement and the life of worldly success. In the third stanza, description of the hill becomes an expression of human qualities: feminine grace, manly courtesy, and a generous concern for those beneath it are all implied in the account of its physical characteristics. The hill is a model not only of physical perfection, but also of human nature at its best - human nature as it is to be found in Lord Fairfax and his Lady. In stanza IV, the parallel with Fairfax is made clearer, as the imagery suggests the trade of war:-

Yet thus it all the field commands,
And in unenvy'd Greatness stands.

The literal and figurative extensions of the word "Greatness" are ensured by the puns in "the field commands", which bring together the physical pre-eminence of the hill and the military authority of its lord.

Stanzas V and VI introduce the grove on the top of the hill, and set up a number of associations which Marvell was to exploit further

in Upon Appleton House. The "sacred Shade" of these trees looks forward to the woodland temple of the longer poem, and the idea of the grove as a sanctuary, which "No hostile hand durst ere invade", foreshadows the poet's escape into the natural fortress from the dart of beauty and the horsemen of the world. The conceit of the name of Lady Fairfax being engraved "already in their Heart" leads to an extended personification of the trees:-

For they ('tis credible) have sense,
 As We, of Love and Reverence,
 And underneath the Courser Rind
 The Genius of the house do bind.
 Hence they successes seem to know,
 And in their Lord's advancement grow;
 But in no Memory were seen
 As under this so straight and green.

Marvell cannot accept as wholeheartedly as Vaughan that even trees "have sense",⁸⁴ but the strategy of his argument demands that we register the hesitation of "'tis credible" and then pass on to at least imaginative assent in what follows. He seems to acknowledge the hyperbolical nature of his literary device, but to insist that it be taken seriously as a means of insight into a genuine truth. The third couplet of the stanza provides another instance of Marvell's habit of invoking traditional conceits only to twist them to his own use. Friedman cites a passage from Macbeth - "I have begun to plant thee, and will labour/To make thee full of growing" - and suggests that in Marvell's lines "the metaphor is turned upon itself by characterizing the trees as such courtiers".⁸⁵ Just as in 'Bermudas' he finds a real "eternal Spring", so here he finds trees which

(according to the hyperbole) do grow with their patron. The traditional metaphor has its literal counterpart in the natural world: trees grow like courtiers, who are often imagined as growing like trees.

After two more stanzas which elaborate this personification of the trees, Marvell addresses them directly, and ends with a series of paradoxes based on traditional images of height and lowness, shade and brightness:-

Therefore to your obscurer Seats
From his own Brightness he retreats:
Nor he the Hills without the Groves,
Nor Height but with Retirement loves.

Marvell here solves the problem of praising Fairfax's decision to abandon politics and soldiering without casting doubt on the value of his achievements in those fields. Fairfax is retiring from success, not from failure. His retirement into the shade of the groves is not a retreat into obscurity - the trees are on top of the hill of his fame. The quiet life of contemplation has been earned in the turbulent world of affairs, and represents the mature choice of a man who has shown that he can excel in the arena he is abandoning. His achievements are not lessened, but enhanced, by his retreat from "his own Brightness".

8. Scatter'd Sibyls Leaves: Upon Appleton House.

Upon Appleton House (pp. 59-83) is the most ambitious and most complex of all Marvell's poems. It juxtaposes, contrasts, fuses a great many of the literary commonplaces - both of genre and of detail - of the period. Basically a eulogy on a great man, his family, his

house, and his estate - in the tradition of Jonson's 'To Penshurst',⁸⁶ - it exploits the topos of the Ideal Day;⁸⁷ it contains passages of "metaphysical" description⁸⁸ reminiscent of Cleveland and Eldred Revett's nature pieces; it makes use of the techniques of allegory and emblem; it has a pastoral episode, an exploration of the retirement theme, a quasi-mystical experience in a woodland grove,⁸⁹ and a symbolic maiden who mysteriously reigns over the natural scene much as Elizabeth Drury's spirit presides over Donne's Anniversaries. This extraordinary combination of the standard properties of seventeenth-century poetry is no accident. Upon Appleton House marks the climax of the process we have seen at work in the shorter poems: a process of manipulating normal literary responses to well-known genres and techniques in order to expose the complexity of human experience. We are allowed to be certain of nothing. Sensuous perceptions turn out to be illusory; description merges into allegory, but no consistent allegorical reading is possible; passages which begin as metaphor end as reality; serious meditations are undercut by humour; comic scenes are charged with profound seriousness.⁹⁰

Details from nature first become prominent in the poem in stanzas xxxvi-xlvi, which are concerned with the gardens of Appleton House, laid out "In the just Figure of a Fort". The methods of the four stanzas describing the beds of flowers can be represented by stanza xxxvii. The entire passage is governed by a single metaphor: that of seeing the gardens as a military camp. Neither vehicle nor tenor

predominates. Every detail partakes equally of the world of nature and the world of soldiering: the "Colours of the Day" are both the dawn sky and regimental flags; the bee hums and beats a tattoo; the flowers unfurl their petals as soldiers unfurl their ensigns; Pan is the god of nature and a pan is part of a musket; the flask is both a vial for perfume and a container for gunpowder. The sequence is based on a kind of extended pun: nature and the art of war come together in a single act of perception; two areas of experience fuse. The rhetorical form of a couplet from stanza xl is symptomatic of Marvell's strategy:-

Then in some Flow'rs beloved Hut
Each Bee as Sentinel is shut.

Flower and bee are not compared to hut and sentinel; the flower literally is a hut for the bee inside it; the bee is there not "like" a sentinel, but "as Sentinel" - identification is complete. The military metaphor - doubly appropriate, since part of the gardens has been contrived to look like a fort, and since their owner is himself a great general - becomes not so much a device for describing as a new and witty way of seeing. Marvell's perceptions, one might say, are not simply accurate, they are also imaginative.

These stanzas are more, however, than a piece of witty virtuosity. They must be read in the wider context of Fairfax's career and of the symbolic value of gardens in literary tradition. Marvell widens his frame of reference in the lines that follow (stanzas xli-xliii). Memories of the garden of England and the Garden of Eden must colour

our response to the gardens of Appleton House. Both have been desecrated, by Civil war and by the Fall. There was a time when "Gardens only had their towers, / And all the Garrisons were Flowers". But now dissentious men "Ord'nance Plant and Powder sow". The innocent nature of a past golden age, seduced into lechery in 'The Mower against Gardens', has also been enlisted into the ranks of warring men. We can now see the full significance of the military metaphors of stanzas xxxvii-xl. In the apparently harmless world of flowers the possibility of warfare is always present, just as the possibility of sin was always present in the garden of Adam and Eve and the serpent was always ready to entangle itself in the garlands of 'The Coronet'. The "beloved Hut" of the flower contains a sentinel; the "fragrant Vollyes" of the sweet-smelling blooms can become the death-dealing cannons of civil war. Innocence contains within itself the seeds of destructive experience.

But gardens are not only symbolic of loss, or prospective loss, as in 'The Nymph and the Faun' and 'Little T.C.' They are also places where man can find reconciliation, symbols of the mind in meditation - the hortus conclusus.⁹¹ This brings Marvell back to Fairfax, who had retired from the real forts of battle to the "five imaginary Forts" of Nun Appleton. Here the contemplative man can "Ambition weed" and "Conscience till". The plants of the mind replace the plants of the vegetable world and the plants of war. Conscience is described as a "sensitive plant". The man who has passed through the trials of experience, and has come at last to seek out innocent contentment in

the retired garden, is able to see the paradoxes and conflicts of the human condition in a truer perspective. The world of material success exists, but he realises that fulfilment belongs to the realm of the spirit. His tender conscience recoils from the world "at ev'ry touch", sure of the eternal crown of the saints.

When one returns to the account of the flowers in stanzas xxxvii-xl after reading these developments of the garden imagery, one recognizes the subtlety of Marvell's metaphoric method. The flowers can be seen as looking forward from innocence to experience, and at the same time from experience back to innocence, depending on which literary convention one applies - that of the lost paradise of pastoral and scripture, or that of the hortus conclusus of the retirement tradition. One recognizes the possibility of stressing either the sinister overtones of war, or the idyllic overtones of natural beauty.

With stanza xlvii a new movement begins:-

And now to the Abbyss I pass
Of that unfathomable Grass.

The pronoun introduces the poet as a presence into the poem for the first time, though as yet he remains a detached observer of the scene before him. The topos of the walk round the estate provides a framework for what follows, but this is strangely overlaid by a time sequence which takes us through the activities of several summer months in the course of a single day.⁹² (The Ideal Day begins with the dawn of stanza xxxvii.) The account of the yearly pageant of the meadows occupies stanzas xlvii-lx. The keynote of this section is

sounded in the word "unfathomable", a word which leads into the metaphor of the sea, but which also suggests the mysteriousness of the vision that succeeds. As Marvell says in the next stanza, taking up two aspects of the word:-

To see Men through this Meadow Dive,
We wonder how they rise alive.

Barbara Everett has written that, "Whenever the words Grass and Greenness occur in Marvell, all known landscapes become uncertain and dissolve".⁹³ As we pass into the unfathomable deeps of the meadows, we enter a realm of continual change where normal hierarchies break down and where "wonder" is the only appropriate response. Men are like grasshoppers, grasshoppers are giants; green spires of grass become precipices; meadows become oceans; mowers become mariners; flowers are plucked from the ocean floor. Theatrical imagery emphasises the pageant-like quality of the experience, and secures a stance of fascinated and awe-struck detachment for the poet and for the reader who watches through his eyes. Nature and art are confused, as the cycle of the seasons is felt to be governed by "Engines strange" (stanza xlix) which keep everything in a state of flux. A masque of mowers enters, only to be metamorphosed into a band of Old Testament Israelites, "Walking on foot through a green Sea". Within a few lines, they become a cruel army who "Massacre the Grass along", and unwittingly murder the innocent fledgling rail. The poet laments the fate of the hapless bird, whose humble obscurity could not save it from the ravages of war. The field strewn with mown hay is like a

battle field, "quilted ore with Bodies slain", and the women turning the hay with pitch-forks are seen to "represent the Pillaging". The "Victors" of this harvest triumph are one moment associated with Alexander, and thenext shrink into mere rustic revellers dancing "in Fairy Circles". As in the account of the gardens, Marvell is not simply using metaphors from war to describe the mowing; war and mowing, soldiers and rustics are perceived as two manifestations of a single truth about the life of man.

The climax of the mowing sequence is reached in stanza lv, where visual perceptions and historical perspectives are curiously disturbed. The fields are a sea, and a desert; the hay-cocks are rocks and pyramids and Roman burial mounds. The great monuments of the past, thrown up "for Soldiers Obsequies", suggest the outcome of the war that was fought out in the process of mowing. But they also serve a deeper purpose, and force us to recognize that the relics of earlier civilizations are part of the same transient scheme as the hay and the contemporary civil turmoil.

Then the engines turn again, and we behold the fields under a different guise. The hay has been cleared away, and the empty spaces call up images of an unpainted canvas, the tabula rasa, and a bull-ring in Madrid before the entry of the bulls. In stanza lvii, the bulls appear on the scene, but are no more than the cattle of the villagers, which prompt the images of fleas and constellations discussed earlier. These "pleasant Acts" are concluded by the

flooding of the river, which "makes the Meadow truly be/(What it but seem'd before) a Sea." What began as a figment of the poet's imagination, as a literary metaphor, is suddenly transformed into reality. The literal scene is perceived as a series of paradoxes (stanzas lix and lx): "The River in it self is drown'd"; eels "bellow in the Ox"; boats sail over bridges; fishes scale the stables; pike swim "in the Pound". The world has become topsy-turvy. Chaos is come again.

Various attempts have been made to impose some sort of order on the confusing impressions of these stanzas. Don Cameron Allen sees them as "an allegorical masque of the recent civil disorders", pointing out that a flood was a traditional image for civil war, and suggesting that "bloody Thestylis" represents "sanguinea Bellona", the rail Charles I, and the "quick Rail" Scotland. He adds that the traditional metaphor of the soldier-reaper may also contain allusions to the Reaping Angel of Revelations, and that "all men are grass".⁹⁴ Professor Røstvig traces "the existence of a possible anagogical interpretation", and finds that the Biblical allusions throughout the poem "transform the landscape into a complete map of the world against which all major events in the history of man are acted out".⁹⁵ It seems to me that, while allusions to contemporary and historical events undoubtedly occur, it is a mistake to seek for any consistent allegory in the poem. Marvell's whole method is directed towards creating an overwhelming impression of disorder; visual perception, moral certainties, historical perspectives are all shown to be simplifications of human experience. We can no more understand the past or

make strict ethical judgments than we can be sure of the evidence of our imperfect senses. Life is too various and too perplexing for us to arrange it into neatly comprehensible patterns. The human mind is constantly trying to simplify experience, but experience itself teaches us - if we are willing to learn - that simplicity is a falsifying dream, like the dream of pastoral. The function of the allusions is to give us tantalising glimpses of possible patterns, only to jerk our minds into recognizing the incomprehensibility of our condition.

A second occurrence of the first person pronoun marks the beginning of another movement in stanza lxi:-

But I, retiring from the Flood,
Take Sanctuary in the Wood;
And, while it lasts, my self imbark
In this yet green, yet growing Ark.

In this part of the poem, the speaker will become much more intimately involved with the natural surroundings. Earlier he simply passed into the meadows at the start of his walk round the estate, and he remained a detached observer of the scene. The rising of the flood of disorder has threatened him personally, and he is now forced to "take Sanctuary" - a positive action for his own preservation. A number of associations converge at this point. The phrase "retiring from the Flood" and the idea of a woodland retreat remind us of Fairfax's retirement from the flood of Civil War to the "sacred Shade" of Bill-borow, and of the tradition of retirement poetry in general; the reference to the Ark ensures that we remember the Biblical Flood

which came as a judgment on a sinful race; the word "green" indicates that Marvell is entering a sanctuary of nature, and recalls other uses of the word as a symbol of innocence - suggesting that the speaker is attempting to regain a lost world of pastoral harmony; the pun on "imbark" relates this part of the poem to other woodland pieces, like Lovelace's 'Aramantha',⁹⁶ and looks forward to the witty identification of poet and tree in stanza lxxi; and the parenthetical "while it lasts" calls to mind the many "time" references in Marvell's other poems - the repeated "ere" and the "Mean time" of 'Little T.C.', the "yet" and "soon" of stanza I of 'The Unfortunate Lover', the "have been" and "shall now" of the last stanza of 'The Mower's Song' - and emphasises that nothing is permanent in a time-bound world, neither the good things nor the bad.

Stanzas lxii-lxiv concentrate on the wood itself, seeing it as a symbol of the Fairfax family tree; and of the Hermetic "Fifth Element";⁹⁷ and finally recognizing it as a "Temple green" - a shrine to nature, like the temple of rocks in 'Bermudas'. Each of these interpretations is firmly based in the physical appearance of the mass of the wood, and "Columnes" of the individual trees. Description and significance go forward together, and the poetic method ensures that neither usurps a dominant role.

The poet then turns from the wood itself to the creatures which dwell within its shade. In stanza lxv, the nightingale sings to an attentive audience of trees, providing an interesting variation on the Orpheus convention;⁹⁸ in stanza lxvi, the poet prefers the music

of the married stock-doves; in stanza lxvii, he sees the "hatching Thrustles shining Eye", the heron teaching its young to fly,⁹⁹ and refers in a simile to the stork which was believed to leave behind one of its brood as a gift for the owner of the house on which it built its nest. These birds are not the random observations of a Romantic nature poet - not even the notorious thrush, which excited so much interest among the critics of the nineteenth century. D.C. Allen has pointed out the domestic sequence, from the lovelorn, to the married (are the doves mourning because they lack offspring?), to the parent on the nest of eggs, to the education of the young.¹⁰⁰ Kitty Scoular finds in the "life of the wood, in its order, its virtues and its failures" - and especially in the relationships hinted at in the description of the trees which listen to the nightingale's song - "an image of society".¹⁰¹ In withdrawing into the wood, Marvell is withdrawing into his own mind, where, as in stanza VI of 'The Garden', there is an imaginative counterpart of "each kind" in the external world.¹⁰² In the meadows of Nun Appleton he watched a pageant of disorder; in the wood of the meditative mind he recovers an image of order and hierarchy in society and family life.

In stanzas lxviii-lxx, he reaches an understanding of the apparent turmoil in politics by contemplating the activities of the woodpecker. This passage is an apotheosis of the emblematic method, rather like 'On a Drop of Dew'. The inherent weakness of the emblem books and of the literary technique derived from them is that there is usually no vital imaginative link between the description and the interpretation. A

picture or verbal portrait is given, and then a moral is imposed upon it.¹⁰³ In these stanzas Marvell allows the moral implications to emerge quite naturally during the course of the description itself, so that the moral application, when it comes, seems an inevitable extension of what is already imaginatively convincing.

The physical presence of the hewel is vividly established in the first two stanzas by the precise details of his progress up the tree, and his "tinkling with his Beak". But moral suggestions appear early in the ambivalence of "upright", and in the slight distortion of the facts in the phrase "to keep it clean". The bird really gleans the wood-moths as food, for its own benefit, not for the tree's. Its motives are again interpreted in a moral light in the final line of this stanza - "Which fit to stand and which to fell". These implications continue in the ambivalent "good" - physically or morally sound - and in the mention of "the tainted Side". All this is presented in the guise of description. Not until the last couplet of stanza lxxix does Marvell allow an overt comment, which must have suggested the recent execution of King Charles - "the tallest Oak", the symbol of kingship - to contemporary readers. Long before any explicit interpretation is offered, the hewel is felt as a moral force testing the quality of the things around him. The last stanza (lxx) continues the veiled references to recent history,¹⁰⁴ and widens the moral context by suggesting comparisons with the first entry of the worm of evil into the human race. The final couplet achieves a sense of underlying wisdom and order in the apparent disorder of experience:-

While the Oake seems to fall content,
Viewing the Treason's Punishment.

The oak - and the king, in a utopian world of politics sadly unlike contemporary England - "fall content" when they recognize that the weeding out of corruption in the forest - and in the state - is necessary for the general well-being.

In these stanzas, Marvell has developed an orthodox emblem, with its morals about "our Flesh corrupt within" and the sudden overthrow of the great; has given an example of how to "read in Natures Mystick Book"; and has made a covert reference to contemporary English history, relating, as he had more explicitly in 'An Horation Ode', political developments to the laws of nature. And he has done all this in the course of what is ostensibly a description of the activities of one of nature's creatures.

At last, with stanza lxxi, the poet's personal involvement with the things he has been describing and interpreting becomes the centre of attention:-

Thus I, easie Philosopher,
Among the Birds and Trees confer:
And little now to make me, wants
Or of the Fowles, or of the Plants.

There is a sense of uneasiness - almost of self-mockery - in his recognition that the answers he has found in the wood are too readily come by. He is an "easie Philosopher" in two respects: he is at ease, in the comforting refuge of the grove; and his philosophy is easy, which implies that it cannot be fully grappling with the difficulties of experience. The phrasing of the second couplet is significant: he is

not really at one with the birds and trees. The humour, with a tinge of almost pathetic frustration, breaks out more obviously in the next lines:-

Give me but Wings as they, and I
Streight floting on the Air shall fly.

Man yearns to fly with the birds, to escape the restraints of his humanity, but this, the poet wryly admits, is no more than an attractive fancy. The following stanzas balance ambiguously between the serious and the comic. The poet begins to call to the birds "In their most learned Original". "Most learned" points in two directions: it is ironic - the birds are not learned; and it implies a mystical conception of nature, which attributes to the unfallen creation - as much of Vaughan's poetry does - a purity of spiritual wisdom unattainable by sinful man. The attempt to communicate with nature, and to learn true wisdom from the creatures, reaches a climax in stanza lxxiii. As in so many of Marvell's poems - and in particular the Mower sequence - the governing factor in any approach to knowledge is the mind of man. The poet's "Phancy" weaves "strange Prophecies" out of the "scatter'd Sibyls Leaves" of the forest. But the fancy is an unreliable faculty, and one especially suspect in the mid-seventeenth century.¹⁰⁵ (Even the Romantic poet Keats was forced to question the validity of his vision inspired by the song of the nightingale.) The hyperbole of claiming that all the wisdom of the ancients - of Rome and Greece and Palestine - is to be found in the "light Mosaick" of the ground dappled with sunshine and shadow is intentionally extra-

vagant, and contains in its rhetoric an ironic comment on itself. The mosaic revelation of the woodland scene is "light" in the same way that the philosophy is "easie" - it is too insubstantial to be finally convincing. "Thrice happy", indeed, would be the man who could read in it "not mistook". But Marvell's faith in the mind's ability to attain certainty is not sufficiently strong for him to endorse his own half-comic claims.¹⁰⁶ The Book of Nature of the emblematisers, and of Vaughan and Fane and Benlowes, may contain divine truths, but interpreting that book is too dubious a business for Marvell's sceptical mind to credit. He has once again adopted the machinery and approaches of established literary modes only to expose their inadequacy as a means to truth.

The woodland episode continues with a passage in which the poet abandons himself to the sensuous enjoyment of nature (stanzas lxxiv-lxxviii). If he cannot understand, he will give up all pretence to knowledge and pursue the pleasures of the body. He presents this experience in a series of extravagant and erotic images. The oak leaves "me embroyder all"; the ivy "Me licks, and clasps, and curles, and hales"; the breeze "Flatters with Air my panting Brows". The burlesque intention of all this reaches a climax in the blatant comedy of the lines:-

Under this antick Cope I move
Like some great Prelate of the Grove.¹⁰⁷

The rejection of delusive thought in favour of pure sensation is expressed most plainly at the end of stanza lxxv:-

Who, as my Hair, my Thoughts too shed,
And winnow from the Chaff my Head.

He wants to shed "Thoughts", which are the "Chaff" of the head, and give himself up to the flattering coolness of the breeze. He goes on:-

How safe, methinks, and strong, behind
These Trees have I incamp'd my Mind.

Neither Beauty, nor the World, nor the Horsemen of the wars can harm him in his pleasant retreat into the senses. But the "methinks" signals an ironic qualification: he has escaped these dangers and the problems of experience they pose only by virtue of denying one part of his human nature. His mind is fortified against thought. It is not meeting and overcoming passion and sin; it is refusing to face them. Such an answer to the difficulties of life will not be satisfying for long. The desperate plea of stanzas lxxvii-lxxviii that he may "never leave this Place", but remain forever entwined by the "gadding Vines" and staked down by the "courteous Briars", is in its very extravagance an acknowledgement that this kind of escape is not possible as a way of life, any more than the idea that Little T.C. could "reform the Errours of the Spring" was a serious suggestion. It represents a recurring human dream, not the facts of existence.

The woodland episode of Upon Appleton House belongs to the tradition of the French libertin poems of solitude, Lovelace's 'Aramantha', and Fane's and Benlowes's retirement poems, but it consciously uses the conventional materials to work against and finally reject the tradition and the attitudes associated with it. It does this partly by demonstrating that the sensuous episode is only an episode, and

that the arch-enemy Time will reassert his sway over mankind. The flood which drove the poet into the wood subsides, and he returns to the meadows to find everything changed yet again (stanza lxxix). The world itself now appears to be purged of the disorder and corruption that marred it earlier. Images of Eden and of the cleansing waters of redemption reinforce the visual image of the freshness of the grass. A golden age of innocence has returned, and the poet relaxes into further sensuous enjoyment, like a pastoral shepherd or a classical river god:-

Abandoning my lazy Side,
 Stretcht as a Bank unto the Tide.
 (stanza lxxxix)

Could "Tide" contain a punning reference to time, implying that the sea of time can be held back by the indolence of the happy man?¹⁰⁸

The poet is shaken out of his lethargy, however, by the appearance of Fairfax's daughter, whose very presence is a rebuke to his sensuous idyll. The hooks and angles of the fisherman are dismissed, with perhaps a touch of humour, as "idle Utensils",¹⁰⁹ and the "trifling Youth" is commanded to hide his "Pleasures slight". The passage which follows (stanzas lxxiii-lxxxvi) is in part a hyperbolical compliment to the daughter of a patron, but it is more than that. Mary Fairfax comes to stand for civilization itself; for those forces which can make something coherent and orderly out of the confusion of nature. Only by exerting the powers which he has been given over the natural world can man make it a fit and ordered place for a rational being to live in. Man must not recoil from the problems of disorder - in

nature or in the human community rent by Civil War - but must use his gifts to restore order. The closing sequence of the poem asserts this by exploiting a number of literary conventions in its praise of Mary Fairfax. She - and the civilizing power she symbolizes - at once have an influence on nature similar to that which she had on the idling poet:-

See how loose Nature, in respect
To her, it self doth recollect.

Art needs to make patterned beauty out of the looseness of nature. It may be misused, as Damon argued in 'The Mower against Gardens', but that does not mean that all art is to be rejected.

Mary is next likened to the halcyon, a bird of peace, bringing harmony to the evening landscape, and this image leads into another which we have encountered before in 'The Unfortunate Lover':-

Maria such, and so doth hush
The World, and through the Ev'ning rush.
No new-born Comet such a Train
Draws through the Skie, nor Star new-slain.
For streight those giddy Rockets fail,
Which from the putrid Earth exhale,
But by her Flames, in Heaven try'd,
Nature is wholly vitrifi'd.

(stanza lxxxvi)

She can "make impression upon Time", because the power that resides in her is not bounded by birth and death - unlike the "new-born Comet" and the "Star new-slain". Since her flames are from Heaven - from the "Regions more refin'd and faire" - and not from the "putrid Earth", she can vitrify nature, give permanence to her works. Marvell exploits the pastoral hyperbole to suggest that any beauty and value the

gardens and meadows and woodlands of the preceding poem may have are derived from her (stanza lxxvii). Nature offers her its fruits, transformed into products of art: the meadows are a carpet; the brook is a mirror; the wood is a screen (stanza lxxxviii). She becomes both a goddess of Nature and a goddess of Art, holding in harmonious balance those two warring but necessary components of human civilization. By providing it with such a rich context, Marvell discovers a new and profound significance in the popular, but often trivial, convention of the pastoral hyperbole.

After several more stanzas praising Mary and her family as pre-eminent examples of civilized humanity, he returns to the landscape which provided the starting-point for his exploration of human experience (stanza lxxxvi). The meadows of Nun Appleton, with their abysses and precipices of grass, their "Desert Memphis Sand", their pyramids, and the strange distortions and changes of perspective did indeed furnish an image of the topsy-turvy world. But Maria controls all this confusion, and in her "lesser World" creates a finer and more comprehensible vision of ordered beauty: a vision of Nature, Heaven, and Art in perfect harmony. That sense of harmony is behind the concluding images of the poem. The salmon-fishers - representatives of the "rational Amphibii", mankind - with their canoes on their heads, correspond to the tortoises of the inferior creation and to the all-encompassing heavens, whose "dark Hemisphere/Does now like one of them appear".

9. Sweet and Wholesome Hours: 'The Garden'.

'The Garden' (pp. 48-50) has come in for a great deal of interpretation during the last few decades. The main difficulty seems to be in deciding the kind of symbolic value to be accorded to the natural imagery in which it abounds, and this in turn demands an understanding of the literary or philosophical traditions which the poem exploits. It has been read as an exercise in neo-Platonism,¹¹⁰ as an Horatian retirement poem in the tradition of Casimire,¹¹¹ as a poem in praise of solitude in the tradition of the French libertins,¹¹² as "a poem of the anti-genre of the naturalist paradise",¹¹³ as "a continuation . . . of that very ancient philosophic and theological debate on the respective benefits of society and solitude, the active and the contemplative life",¹¹⁴ as a poem that "should be read in the context of the Song of Songs",¹¹⁵ and as a comic refutation of the ideal of retirement achieved by pushing the claims of that ideal to absurd limits.¹¹⁶ The truth seems to be that most, if not all, of these readings have a limited relevance to Marvell's poem, but that none of them alone can account for its subtle variety of tone and range of allusion. Donald M. Friedman comes closest to a satisfactory statement of the poet's methods and achievement, when he describes him as "forcing the garden poem to absorb and contain all the meanings that he saw the genre to possess potentially".¹¹⁷ This needs to be tempered only by Joseph H. Summers's perception of the current of humour which runs throughout the poem - humour which begins with the "self-conscious false naiveté" of the first stanza.¹¹⁸ Many critics have taken 'The Garden' too solemnly because they have tried

to read it as if it were in the Romantic tradition in which the "I" were the poet himself, speaking with "sincerity" out of "personal experience". Surely the speaker here - and in the subjective section of 'Upon Appleton House' - is a dramatic figure, whose attitudes to experience are to be observed and assessed critically, like those of Damon the Mower. The "I" of 'The Garden' is a Damon who has run his "Passions heat" and is now seeking once more harmony within himself and with his environment. But he is a Damon who is much more aware of his own complexity, and of the fallacies inherent in the over-simplified attitudes of literary genres.

It is instructive to compare two commentaries on the use of the natural images in stanza I, to see how a proper sensitivity to tone is essential in understanding Marvell's poetic technique. Stanley Stewart explains soberly:-

The reader is aware that the Palm, the Oak, and Bay are rewards which go only to a limited number of fortunate human beings, to those who are victorious in the various arenas of competition. Yet these rewards, rather than suggesting the satisfactions of power and fame, bear witness to the meaninglessness of even the most effective human effort. 119

Joseph Summers is alive to the tonal value of words like "amaze", "prudently", and the repeated "all" of line seven, and to the absurdity inherent in the whole proposition:-

The speaker looks at the incredible labors which men undergo for "the palm, the oak, or bays" and pretends he thinks that all they want are those "crowns", each made from the leaves of only one tree, as shades from the sun - the physical symbols for a doubtful utilitarian purpose rather than the recognition of victory and triumph that the symbols signify. 120

Marvell is exploiting the fact that details from the natural world - the trees - have a traditional symbolic value. He forces us to recognize that the value lies in the human achievement, and not in the natural object itself. (In a somewhat different way he makes us see, in the Mower poems, that the truth of the pathetic fallacy is psychological rather than scientific or philosophical.) It is only because men have chosen to represent military victory by the oak crown that the oak leaves have any significance in the world of human affairs. In themselves they are simply leaves, which give little shade when removed from their natural place on the tree.

The key to stanza II is to be found in the parenthetical phrase "if here below". (Compare the force of the similar qualifications "not mistook" and "methinks" in stanzas lxxiii and lxxvi of Upon Appleton House.) "Fair quiet" and "Innocence" - if they are to be found at all on earth, which may be doubtful - "Only among the Plants will grow". So the man who wishes to enjoy them must renounce his full human citizenship, and escape into the "delicious Solitude" of the garden. Quiet and innocence are not a natural part of the human condition. Cromwell, the greatest man of his age, had recognized this, and left the unsatisfactory indolence of his "private Gardens".

Stanzas III and IV hark back to the world of pastoral and Petrarchan love, with the allusions to the classical gods and nymphs and the "Fond Lovers, cruel as their Flame". It is no serious answer to the problem of love to tell the lover to transfer his affections to a tree - it is a facetious evasion. The technique of stanza IV is

similar to that of stanza I. The gods must have been extremely frustrated at losing the pleasures they anticipated, but the speaker pretends that they pursued the nymphs on purpose that they might become plants. Love does indeed make "his best retreat" into the garden - but it is a retreat in the military sense, made by a man who cannot cope with the real experiences of life. He has not earned his retirement, as Fairfax had in 'Upon the Hill and Grove at Bill-borow'; he has opted out of the race or battle.

Stanzas V-VII form the core of the poem. Up to this point, the speaker has been arguing the superiority of life in the garden over life in the world of men and action; now he evokes, through a series of natural images, the quality of life offered by the garden. Stanza V is amenable to various esoteric explications - including one which sees it as a Hermetic account of the Creation, and the merging of the spirit of man with the material universe¹²¹ - but it seems best to recognize above all the extreme sensuousness and the extravagance of the literary figure. Life in the garden offers a feast of sensuous gratification, but there is a hint of the grotesque in the way Marvell outdoes all his predecessors in the use of this commonplace topos of the pastoral hyperbole. Others used it as a means of complimenting ladies, in patently artificial genre-pieces;¹²² or for more serious purposes in quasi-mystical meditations on the unity between man and God through the contemplation of nature.¹²³ Nature here is almost embarrassingly attentive. The whole thing is a little too extravagant to be taken quite seriously. Again, the tone is important. The

picture of the poet tripping over melons and being showered by apples must cast doubt on the solemn remarks of the critics that "Melon . . . is the Greek for apple; 'all flesh is grass' . . . Mere grapes are at once the primitive and innocent wine";¹²⁴ and that the poet is here "falling into carnal sin".¹²⁵ There may well be allusions to the Fall of Adam, and even to the works of Hermes Trismegistus, but that should not prevent us from responding to the burlesque flavour of the passage.

Stanza VI moves from the senses to the mind. The speaker withdraws from all contact with the material world - as the poet withdrew into the woodland sanctuary in Upon Appleton House and as Damon wanted to "seek out the Shades" like the grasshopper. Just as the poet found images of an ordered society and family life among the trees, so the speaker here can create "Far other Worlds, and other Seas" in the privacy of his own mind. None of the critics have commented on the force of the word "Annihilating", which has the same overtones as the line "Depopulating all the Ground" in 'Damon the Mower'. The mind's desire to be self-sufficient is destructive of its complete relationship with the environment. The "green Thought in a green Shade" is achieved at the expense of "all that's made". The mind is abandoning the body, or it would do so if the thought were not in some way dependant on the natural surroundings of "green Shade". The "Mean while" of the first line must be taken into account. This retreat into the mind is accomplished at the same time as the bodily involvement with nature through the senses.

In stanza VII the third component of man, the soul, enjoys the

garden experience in its own way. The fountain and the fruit-tree belong to pastoral, and to Christian symbolism; the bird is a traditional symbol for the soul; the "various Light" may well be, as Miss Wallerstein says, "the light of the many springing from the One real light";¹²⁶ but Marvell is not writing a Christian or a neo-Platonic mystical poem. The bird as he describes it, singing, whetting and combing its wings, is self-absorbed, not absorbed in the contemplation of ultimate reality. Renato Poggioli has some very sensible comments to make on the symbolic function of this creature:-

Far from being an allegory of the religious soul, which trains itself through contemplative life to fly back to its eternal abode, Marvell's bird stands for an all too human and personal psyche, which retreats from the world of society into the world of nature so as to be less distracted from the bemused contemplation of its own loveliness.¹²⁷

Marvell has exploited traditional expectations, perverting the application of well-known imagery. Just when the soul should reach the stage of union with the One or with God, after passing through the stages of the senses and the mind, it is seen to have achieved nothing more than concentration on itself. In fact, in each of these three central stanzas, the speaker is preoccupied with himself - with the "wond'rous Life" of sensuous indulgence, with the intuned "happiness" of the "green Thought", and with the beauty of the soul's plumage. Retreat from the dusty world of experience is a retreat only into the self.

In the last two stanzas, the speaker returns to a more objective commentary. In stanza VIII he looks back, with tongue in cheek, to the days when Adam lived the life of solitude which he has been

advocating:-

But 'twas beyond a Mortal's share
To wander solitary there.

This is double-edged: the speaker, wearing his mask of naivety, laments the impossibility of such a state of perfect bliss for a mere mortal. But the more sophisticated mind behind the mask knows that being mortal - that is, being both a human being, and subject to time and death - involves more serious and testing experiences than that of self-contemplation in an idyllic garden.

In stanza IX time is readmitted to the poem, as it must be, and the escapism of the garden dream is acknowledged:-

How could such sweet and wholesome Hours
Be reckon'd but with herbs and flow'rs!

Such retreats into selfish enjoyment may be pleasant, but they are like the flowers in more than their sweetness. Flowers are the archetypal symbol of transience, of short-lived beauty and joy. They are thus doubly appropriate as instruments for measuring the time spent in the garden, lost in a dream of innocence and uninvolvedness. Retirement, Marvell demonstrates - using all the materials of the retirement genre - is not a viable alternative to life. As Summers puts it, our experiences in the garden "are only an evanescent part of the life that we value, and a smaller part still of the life that we live".¹²⁸

Damon the Mower was bewildered by the onset of experience, and never came to understand the true relationship between his own self and the alien and indifferent universe around him. The speakers in

Upon Appleton House and 'The Garden' still yearn for a lost sense of belonging and innocence, but they have more maturely defined themselves, and therefore can acknowledge their difficult place in a difficult world. Retreat from that world remains a temptation, as it did for a whole generation of men in the mid-seventeenth century, but it is one which they are able to see in a proper perspective. It is no wonder that Andrew Marvell the man turned to active involvement in politics in the latter part of his career.

10. Conclusion.

Although Marvell lived in a revolutionary age, and made the prevailing sense of disorientation the matter and method of his lyric poetry, in the handling of natural imagery, as in other aspects of his art, he does not break new literary ground. As Rosalie Colie has put it, in one of the most recent full-length studies of his work:-

Marvell wrote at the limits of his traditions . . . but he wrote from well within them. His perspective and his models come from his past, and he does not look ahead to new literary fashions. . . . Everything Marvell wrote came to him somehow prepared, somehow fixed and processed. . . . Marvell does not open for us . . . immense vistas of new poetic possibility. He does something quite different, boring deep into his own material to discover the concealed, to discard the outworn and useless, to re-animate with his intellectual energy traditions in his day fading into meaninglessness. Chiefly, he accomplishes this by a return to exactness in language, in syntax, metaphor, and image, to display the significances of his tradition.¹²⁹

The earlier chapters of this study have established just what material, in the single area of natural imagery, was available to Marvell, and have explored some of the ways in which it had been "prepared", "fixed and processed" by his predecessors great and small. Most of

the descriptive and figurative uses of natural details examined in Part Two have made their appearance in the course of this chapter: the periphrasis, the locus amoenus and earthly paradise, the pathetic fallacy and pastoral hyperbole, the extravagant "metaphysical" description, the hill poem and prospect piece, the emblem, the beauty-nipped-in-the-bud, carpe florem and memento mori topoi, and a host of traditional natural symbols. Those seventeenth-century modes which mark the growing interest in the relationship between the individual and his rural surroundings, and which foreshadow the development of "nature poetry" in the eighteenth century, are also plentifully in evidence: the exaltation of the Happy Man, the Ideal Day, the cult of solitude and of the poet in the shade, the cultivation and rejection of the sensuous enjoyment of nature, the hortus conclusus, and the many ways of reading in the Book of the Creatures. Out of this "rude heap" of poetic bric-a-brac Marvell created his own "lesser world", polishing dulled surfaces, setting off one familiar item against another so that we are startled by unfamiliar insights, questioning the psychological foundations upon which literary commonplaces are built. The most eclectic and allusive poet of his age, and yet in many ways the freshest and most original; the wittiest, and yet the most sensuous; a sophisticated artist who was preoccupied with simplicity and innocence; Marvell, like the poetry he never took the trouble to publish, was a compendium of paradoxes.

NOTES

1. See William Bowles, Works of Pope, ed. (1806), Vol. I, p. 122, note on Windsor Forest; E.K. Chambers, Review of Aitken's edition of Marvell, The Academy, XLII (17th Sept., 1892), 230-1; Cyril Falls, "Andrew Marvell", The Nineteenth Century and After (1921), p. 637; Legouis and Cazamian, History of English Literature, trans. Helen Douglas Irvine (London, 1926), p. 577.
2. Joseph H. Summers, "Marvell's 'Nature'", ELH, X (1953), reprinted in Andrew Marvell, ed. John Carey (Penguin Books, 1969), p. 139.
3. S.L. Goldberg, "Marvell: Self and Art", Melbourne Critical Review, VII (1965), reprinted in Andrew Marvell, ed. John Carey, p. 163.
4. Robert Ellrodt, Les Poètes Métaphysiques Anglais, 2 vols. (Paris, 1960), II, 150.
5. J.B. Leishman, The Art of Marvell's Poetry (London, 1966), p. 66.
6. Goldberg, op. cit., p. 166.
7. Ruth Wallerstein was one of the earliest critics to draw attention to this aspect of Marvell's poetic character:-
 "It is important to remember first that Marvell is a poet himself highly conscious of form and genre in the design of his poems and that he lived in an age much given to the study of forms in art. . . . And Marvell's early poetry gives clear evidence that he conceived his craft in terms of types in which in each poem treatment of subject, mode of development, and expression have a common traditional character." (Studies in Seventeenth-Century Poetic (Madison and Milwaukee, 1950, reprinted 1965), p. 155.
 Recent books on Marvell by Donald M. Friedman, Ann E. Berthoff, and Rosalie Colie have all explored the implications of this aspect of the poet's craft.
8. Leishman, op. cit., p. 77. See also Kitty Scoular, Natural Magic (Oxford, 1965), p. 164 for a list of the themes and genres assembled in Upon Appleton House; Harold E. Toliver, Marvell's Ironic Vision (New Haven and London, 1965), p. 138 for the suggestion that 'The Garden' "combines pastoral themes with the modes of religious meditation, satire, and the philosophical lyric"; Stanley Stewart, The Enclosed Garden (Madison, Milwaukee, and London, 1966), p. 153 for the view that in 'The Garden' "a number of relevant contexts converge, and Marvell holds them all in poised balance, echoing the libertin pastoral here, parodying it there, alluding to the occult in one moment, turning to the Christian in the next".
9. See Toliver, op. cit., passim; and Donald M. Friedman, Marvell's Pastoral Art (London, 1970), pp. 23-4.
10. See Maren-Sofie Røstvig, The Happy Man, 2nd. ed. (New York, 1962), I, 153-4; and Stanley Stewart, op. cit., p. 155.
11. For example, Ruth Wallerstein has argued for Marvell's extensive debt to such neo-Platonists as St. Bonaventura and Richard of St. Victor, op. cit., pp. 181-277.
12. T.S. Eliot, "Andrew Marvell", Selected Essays, 3rd. ed. (London, 1951), p. 303.

13. Scepticism about the scope of the human mind was a feature of seventeenth-century thought, from the materialist Hobbes to the more traditional Browne. (See above, Chapter II, Sections 4 and 5). Rosalie Colie compares Marvell's attitude to experience with the scepticism of Montaigne:- "In the Apologie in particular, Montaigne presented the physical and historical worlds as unstable, mutable, and shifty, changing even as the world is variously experienced and interpreted. The conceptual world - intellectual, social - . . . is presented as equally unstable and untrustworthy, this shifting an inevitable result of physical and historical mutability and the necessary psychological mutability of minds attempting to cope with it". ("My Echoing Song", (Princeton, 1970), p.183).
14. See Christopher Hill, "Society and Andrew Marvell" in Puritanism and Revolution, (1958, reprinted Panther Books, 1969), pp.324-350, for a historian's account of the relationship between the poetry and the conditions of the age. Hill comes to the conclusion that "all the poems in the last analysis deal with the adjustment of individual conduct to external conditions and forces." (p.348)
15. See, for example, Cleanth Brooks, "Marvell's "Horatian Ode"" and Douglas Bush's "Marvell's "Horatian Ode"", both reprinted in Seventeenth Century English Poetry, ed. William Keast (New York, 1962), pp.321-340, 341-351. See also an interesting account of the poem by A.J.N.Wilson in Critical Quarterly, XI, no.4. (1969), pp.323-41.
16. Friedman, op. cit., p.101. Ann E. Berthoff in The Resolved Soul (Princeton, New Jersey, 1970) takes a similar view of Marvell's conscious concern with problems of expression:- "To explore metaphor is thus to discover meaning; indeed, the philosophic insights offered by Marvell's poetry are often themselves incidental to his exploration of language". (pp.14-15). A number of critics have noted how, in particular poems, he questions "common assumptions and literary conventions". M.C. Bradbrook's study, "Marvell and the Poetry of Rural Solitude", R.E.S., XVII (1941), 37-46 concluded that the woodland episode of Upon Appleton House, and especially stanza lxxvii, was essentially a parody of certain aspects of French libertin poetry. H.R.Swardson has argued that in some of his "pastoral" pieces he is "using the very form and outer machinery of the erotic pastoral" to turn nature "against the erotic tradition". ("Marvell: a New Pastoralism", Poetry and the Fountain of Light (London, 1962), p.99.)
17. The Poems and Letters of Andrew Marvell, ed. H.M. Margoliouth, 2. vols., 2nd ed. (Oxford, 1952), I, 18. All future quotations from Marvell's poetry will be taken from Vol. I of this edition, and page references will be placed in the text.
18. M.C. Bradbrook and M.G. Lloyd Thomas, Andrew Marvell (Cambridge, 1940 and 1961), p.65. Christopher Ricks also comments on the oddity of these lines in Milton's Grand Style (Oxford, 1963), p.143.
19. Colie, op. cit., p.200.

20. See Colie, op. cit., Part IV, Chapter 2, "Visual Traditions" (pp.192-218) for an interesting account of various traditions of visual expression in the painting of the period which seem to parallel some of Marvell's effects in Upon Appleton House.
21. See 'Upon the Hill and Grove at Bill-borow' and Chapter V, Section 3f above.
22. Robert Ellrodt, trans. John Freeman, an excerpt in Andrew Marvell, ed. John Carey (Penguin, 1969), p.153.
23. See above, Chapter IV, Section 6.
24. Kitty Scoular, op. cit., p.187.
25. Ann E. Berthoff's thesis in The Resolved Soul is based on the proposition that, in Marvell's poetry, "the absolute disparity of heaven and earth is mediated by the soul, that the separation of the realms of grace and nature, the discontinuity of time and eternity creates an opposition which the soul can resolutely seize upon, mitigating the terrible force of time through love, heroic action, and contemplation". (pp.5-6)
26. Barbara Everett, "Marvell's 'The Mower's Song'", Critical Quarterly, IV, No. 3 (1962), p.220.
27. Goldberg, op. cit., p.163.
28. See Toliver, Swardson, Leishman, Bradbrook and Lloyd Thomas; and also Renato Poggioli, "The Pastoral of Self", Daedalus, 88, No. 4 (1959), pp. 686-699; and John D. Rosenberg, "Marvell and the Christian Idiom", Boston University Studies in English, IV (1960), pp.152-161.
29. Friedman, op. cit., pp.4-5. See also Rosalie Colie, op. cit., p.15:- "For Marvell, the frame of pastoral convention serves as the excuse for a careful examination of many things, including poetry itself".
30. Bradbrook and Lloyd Thomas, op. cit., p.30.
31. The first record the O.E.D. has of "take in" used to mean "deceive, cheat, trick, impose upon" (Take, 82.o.) is in 1740, so it is unlikely that Marvell intends this insinuation. The meaning "to catch the fancy or affection of . . . to captivate, delight, charm" (O.E.D., 10) is the most probable one.
32. Berthoff stresses the importance of the time theme in this poem, arguing that "the Unfortunate Lover's career in the world of passion corresponds to the temporal life of the soul" (op. cit., p.76). She does not see "the Infant Love" as the innocent love of infancy, however, but glosses the phrase:- "Love, an infant, plays with them" (p.79).
33. Friedman, op. cit., p.4.
34. The Works of George Herbert, ed. F.E.Hutchinson (Oxford, 1945), p.169.
35. The Works of Henry Vaughan, ed. L.C. Martin, 2nd ed. (Oxford, 1957), p.739.
36. See above, Chapter V, Section 1, the references to Waller's 'To a very young lady' and Stanley's 'The Bud'.
37. Genesis, Chapter 2, v.20.

38. For a discussion of the symbolism of the rose see above, Chapter V, Section 2.
39. The whole of the first stanza of Little T.C. illustrates Joan Bennett's statement:- "The green innocent natural world in Marvell's nature poetry is seen by one who is keenly aware of the world inhabited by fallen men". (Five Metaphysical Poets (Cambridge, 1964), p.115. Lawrence Hyman makes the same point in general terms:- "The beauty of nature . . . was to the Renaissance poet not so much a source of pleasure as a constant reminder of his former state". (Andrew Marvell (New York, 1964) p.20.
40. See Bradbrook and Lloyd Thomas, op. cit., p.51; and Ruth Wallerstein, op. cit., pp.175-6.
41. See Genesis, Chapter I, v. 28.
42. Leishman, op. cit., pp.187 and 184.
43. For an exhaustive study of the symbolism associated with the Song of Songs see Stanley Stewart's The Enclosed Garden.
44. D.C.Allen writes:- "The garden is also a secret one, the mind and the heart of the girl, where, in one sense, the fawn played in the true spring. . . . The garden of roses and lilies expresses the mind and the nature of the weeping maid, and she communes in it and through it with the fawn". (Image and Meaning (Baltimore, 1960), p.107)
45. Friedman, op. cit., p.50.
46. ibid., pp.51-2.
47. ibid., p.101.
48. ibid., pp.82-3.
49. Vaughan, Works, ed. cit., p.441.
50. Rosalie Colie notes a typically Marvellian twist given to the imagery in this poem:- "In 'The Coronet', the poet quite literally gathers flowers to weave the garlands for his Saviour's head, a straight and direct form of carpere generally rare in verse". (op. cit., p.52)
51. Leishman, op. cit., p.199.
52. Berthoff describes the poem's method thus:- "The ground of reciprocity shifts continually (proleptically) from the physical to the metaphysical and back again". (op. cit., p.28)
53. Friedman, op. cit., pp.59-60.
54. Toliver, op. cit., p.76.
55. See above, Chapter IV, Section 3, especially, the reference to Waller's 'The Battle of the Summer Islands'.
56. See above, Chapter IV, Section 2 and Section 5, and Chapter XI, Section 4.
57. See Bradbrook and Lloyd Thomas, op. cit., p.65.
58. William H. Halewood, The Poetry of Grace (New Haven and London, 1970), pp.121-2.
59. For an account of earlier seventeenth-century reactions to the Bermudas see Rosalie L. Colie's article, "Marvell's 'Bermudas' and the Puritan Paradise", Renaissance News, X (1957), pp.75-79.

60. J.B. Winterton argues against the glossing of "apples" simply as "pineapples" here, asserting that "surely we should see here a reference to "that mortal fruit" in Eden". ("Some Notes on Marvell's "Bermudas", Notes and Queries, n.s. XV, No. 3 (March 1968), p.102.)
61. Toliver, op. cit., p.101.
62. Bradbrook and Lloyd Thomas, op. cit., p.39. Colie differs from most commentators in feeling that "the person of the Mower . . . cannot be identical in the four poems". ("My Ecchoing Song", p.30.) Berthoff suggests that it is more a question of "consistency in the figure who presents to us many faces in turn". (op. cit., p.134)
63. See Barbara Everett, op. cit., p.221. Edward Tayler, Nature and Art in Renaissance Literature (New York and London, 1964), p.163; William Empson, Some Versions of Pastoral (1935, Penguin Books, 1966), p.106; Summers, "Marvell's "Nature"", loc. cit., p.143; John Creaser, "Marvell's Effortless Superiority", Essays in Criticism, XX, No. 4 (1970), p.407.
64. Tayler, op. cit., p.154.
65. Poggioli, op. cit., p.686.
66. Everett, op. cit., p.220.
67. See the account of the Italianate garden in Chapter II, Section 13, above.
68. See Leishman, op. cit., pp.130-7, and Frank Kermode, ed., The Selected Poetry of Marvell (Signet Classics, 1967), Introduction, pp.xv-xx.
69. Toliver, op. cit., p.107.
70. Friedman, op. cit., p.131.
71. Friedman also hints at this in a note to stanza V, *ibid.*, p.145 note 52.
72. O.E.D. gives the meaning "sexual excitement in animals", sb. 13, but its earliest examples are from 1768 and 1794. sb. 11, "Intensity, or great warmth of feeling . . . excitement, passion, rage", with examples from 1604, 1649, and 1694, is perhaps a safer interpretation here.
73. Peter L. Smith, "Lentus in Umbra: A Symbolic Pattern in Vergil's Eclogues", Phoenix, XIX (1965), p.300.
74. For reference see note 15 above.
75. Others exposed the artificiality of the pathetic fallacy, but Marvell does it far more effectively by presenting the fallacy's hold on the mind of a dramatized speaker, and so focussing attention not only on its rhetorical qualities but also on its psychological implications.
76. Both meanings of the word were current in the mid-seventeenth century. O.E.D. cites examples from 1613, 1660, and 1689 of the meaning "To disclose or expose to view (anything covered up, hidden, or previously unseen), to reveal, show" (3); and examples from 1555, 1585, and 1670 of the meaning "To obtain sight or knowledge of (something previously unknown) for the first time; to come to the knowledge of; to find out" (8).

77. John Creaser suggests that the word "stung" is intended to relate Juliana's activity to that of the serpent:- "the woman and the serpent more than once have similar roles in Marvell's lost paradises" (op. cit., p.406).
78. Friedman argues for this play on words, op. cit., p.133.
79. Cf. Toliver, op. cit., pp.109-110:- "The Mower is outside a paradise irretrievably lost, and yet the myth of a perfect Eden is in some ways as real as the fact of disillusionment: the disruption of the mind's wholeness (its feeling of being "home") is the central fact of the Mower's experience, but the concept of an ideal and unfallen nature is a defining framework".
80. Everett, op. cit., p.220.
81. Religio Medici, Everyman ed. (London, 1965), p.39.
82. See above, Chapter VI, Section 1 and Chapter XI, Section 4.
83. See versions by Cowley, John Norris, and George Granville, discussed in Røstvig's The Happy Man, I, 21, 272, and 297.
84. See Vaughan's "And do they so?", Works, ed. cit., pp.432-3, and Chapter X, Section 5 above.
85. Friedman, op. cit., p.207.
86. See the discussion of the estate poem in Chapter IV, Section 7 above.
87. For an account of the Ideal Day topos see above, Chapter VI, Section 2.
88. See above, Chapter IV, Section 6.
89. See accounts of woodland experiences in Lovelace's 'Aramantha', Milton's 'Il Penseroso' and Benlowes's Theophila in Chapter VI, Section 2, Chapter VII, Section 3, and Chapter XI, Section 5 above.
90. Kitty Scoular catalogues the many strands of theme and imagery that come together in this poem, and comments:- "There is not another place-poem of the same length from the seventeenth century which has as its intention the display of such varieties". (op. cit., pp.164-5) Rosalie Colie declares that "This poem is pointedly like and unlike its generic companions ancient and modern. Like "The Garden", this poem deliberately speaks in several literary languages, several generic vocabularies, several moral styles". (op. cit., p.184)
91. See Shirley's 'The Garden', Chapter VI, Section 5 above.
92. Colie points out that "Time is compressed and pleated here, too, much as the catoptric or masque devices otherwise serve to foreshorten tedious reality". (op. cit., p.261) A similar non-realistic time-scheme governs Milton's twin poems and the last two cantos of Benlowes's Theophila, both of which use the Ideal Day as a framework.
93. Everett, op. cit., p.221.
94. See D.C.Allen, Image and meaning, pp.119, 130, 136 and 137. See also the article by A.B.Chambers, "'I was But an Inverted Tree": Notes toward the History of an Idea", Studies in the Renaissance, VIII (1961), 291-299, for the classical background to flood as metaphor for civil war.
95. Maren-Sofie Røstvig, "'Upon Appleton House" and the Universal History of Man", English Studies, XLII (1961), pp.338 and 343.

96. See 'Aramantha', l. 274:- "Imbark thee in a laurel tree", and ll. 133-164, etc; and also M.C.Bradbrook's article "Marvell and the Poetry of Rural Solitude", R.E.S., XVII (1941), p.38:- "The woodland setting became the usual one for poems on solitude".
97. See Røstvig, op. cit. note 95, p.344 for a discussion of this image.
98. For the use of the Orpheus myth see above, Chapter IV, Section 5.
99. Colie interprets the reference to the heron letting its young one drop as a deliberate sacrifice of the first-born chick. (op. cit., p.197)
100. Allen, op. cit., p.144.
101. Kitty Scoular, op. cit., p.185.
102. See D.C.Allen, op. cit., p.143:- "The wood at Nun Appleton by artistic land-change becomes a sylva mentis, not unlike the hortus mentis of "The Nymph"".
103. See above, Chapter V, Section 5.
104. D.C.Allen, pursuing his allegory, suggests that the oak is Charles I, and that the worm may be Strafford or Laud, op. cit., p.146.
105. O.E.D. gives an example from 1609 and another from 1659 of the word used to mean "an illusion of the senses" (2); and from 1597 and 1693 examples of the meaning "an instance of delusive imagination" (3). 1663 is the first recorded date for the meaning "mental image" (4.b). Several examples, including one from Marvell's own Rehearsal Transposed, support the meaning "A supposition resting on no solid grounds" (6). So to attribute the prophecies to the fancy is no recommendation of their authority as truth.
106. Toliver comments on stanza lxxvii:- "This passionate apostrophe, like the rest of the woodland experience, is projected in a semi-humorous mood, as though reading in this increasingly outmoded book of nature required taking refuge behind a shield of irony". (op. cit., p.123)
107. Colie notes the force of pun here:- "The word "antick" manages semantic references both to miming and to antiquity; the player plays at a natural priesthood, in the shape of a druid, identified as the numen nemoris". (op. cit., p.215)
108. Cf. Julius Caesar, III, i. 256-7:- "Thou art the ruins of the noblest man/That ever lived in the tide of times"; and Macbeth, I, vii, 6:- "But here, upon this bank and shoal of time".
109. Could this be a rebuke to Izaak Walton, whose Compleat Angler was printed in 1653, at about the time Marvell is thought to have been composing this poem?
110. See Ruth Wallerstein, op. cit., pp.318-334; and Milton Klonsky, "A Guide through the Garden", The Sewanee Review, LVIII, No. 1 (1950), 16-35.
111. Røstvig, The Happy Man, I, 154-172.
112. M.C.Bradbrook, article cited in note 96 above.
113. Frank Kermode, "The Argument of Marvell's 'Garden'", Essays in Criticism, II, No. 3 (1952), reprinted in Seventeenth Century English Poetry, ed. Keast, pp.290-304.

114. Leishman, op. cit., p.303.
115. Stewart, op. cit., p.159.
116. Joseph H. Summers, "Reading Marvell's 'Garden'", The Centennial Review, XIII, No. 1 (1969), pp.18-37, reprinted in Chapter V of The Heirs of Donne and Jonson (London, 1970).
117. Friedman, op. cit., p.149.
118. Summers, op. cit., p.25.
119. Stewart, op. cit., p.163.
120. Summers, op. cit., p.25.
121. See Maren-Sofie Røstvig, "Andrew Marvell's 'The Garden': A Hermetic Poem", English Studies, XL (1959), 65-76.
122. See above, Chapter IV, Section 5, and below Appendix C.
123. See above, Chapter XI, Section 4.
124. Empson, op. cit., p.109.
125. Lawrence Hyman, op. cit., p.68.
126. Wallerstein, op. cit., p.168. See also Friedman, op. cit., p.169:- "The fountain and the fruit tree are familiar landmarks of the pastoral landscape; but they are, as well, Christian symbols of spiritual regeneration and the site of man's lapse from grace".
127. Poggioli, op. cit., p.697.
128. Summers, op. cit., note 116 above, p.36.
129. Colie, op. cit., pp.3-4.

Chapter XIII

Paradise Lost

The analysis of Milton's early poetry in Chapter VII has demonstrated the importance of images from nature in his work and discussed some of the ways in which he used them. Although there is ample evidence of his keen sensuous response to the material world, we have seen him approaching nature, whether in descriptive or figurative passages, largely through the medium of literary tradition. We have seen, above all, that decorum is his guiding principle: natural details are always subordinated to the wider meanings of the particular poem. The common periphrastic account of dawn, in the ode 'On the Morning of Christ's Nativity', reaches out beyond the confines of descriptive purpose to serve the theme of the infant God's lordship over nature; the emotional significance of natural details in 'L'Allegro' and 'Il Penseroso', organized around the opposing symbols of Day and Night, is reversed to chime with the contrasting moods of the merry and the melancholy mind; this device is deepened in Comus, where the light-dark symbolism is made to reflect the different moral attitudes of the Lady and the Tempter; in 'Lycidas' new life is breathed into the outworn tropes of pastoral, as they are woven into the moral and emotional pattern of the poem.

Twenty years later,¹ in Paradise Lost, we find the same sensuousness, the same decorous subordination of parts to the whole, the same creative insight into the potentiality of stale traditions - but all displayed with greater mastery as they are pressed into the service

of a far more complex and profound vision of the human predicament. All the descriptive details, all the conventional images and tropes are governed by the moral and theological concerns of a great religious epic.² This is true from the tiniest to the most immense physical effects: from the rose "without thorn" in the unfallen paradise, to the cosmic results of man's disobedience as the angels "turn askance/The Foles of Earth" (Book X, ll. 668-9) and inaugurate the climatic extremes of the world we know.³

Paradise Lost is the culmination of many things: of the Renaissance ambition to produce a vernacular epic that would rival the great models of antiquity; of the growing interest in the beginnings of the universe;⁴ of the preoccupation with a paradisaal state of innocence and the psychological and moral consequences of its loss;⁵ of numerous literary ways of responding to nature and of using natural details in poetry. The very material which Milton chose to treat presents a tremendous challenge - how to depict, with the expansiveness demanded by the epic form, what is beyond the reach of human imagination: Hell, Chaos, Heaven, the act of Creation, unfallen Nature and the lost Paradise itself? This chapter will argue that Milton's uses of natural details are an important part of his response to this challenge.

1. Like and Unlike: the Function of the Similes.

One of Milton's most frequent devices for introducing images from nature is that of the extended simile. Both the device and the material of the similes were part of his inheritance as an epic poet,

as James Whaler demonstrated in a series of articles.⁶ Critical debate has centred on the question of their relevance. Commentators throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries mostly took their cue from Addison's Spectator papers on Paradise Lost, and saw Milton's similes as examples of the "long-tailed" simile, which pursues a comparison "beyond the mere limits of illustrative likeness, for the sake of a rich accumulation of circumstances beautiful in itself".⁷ More recently a number of critics have argued that the beauty of the "circumstances" is incidental to significances of various kinds, which tie the substance of the similes much more closely to the themes and purposes of the poem than earlier writers were aware.⁸ A.J.A. Waldock, in his influential book, remained sceptical: "The effort to find a continuous relevance in Milton's similes may succeed on occasion, but it is an effort, it seems to me, that can easily overreach itself".⁹ The crucial task for the critic is to define the concept of relevance, and once this is attempted it soon becomes evident that the circumstances accumulated in the course of a simile do not always perform the same kind of function, and that the different functions are often embodied in different formal qualities. Some similes, for example, begin with a point of likeness and then proceed to develop the image in unexpected directions, so that they become self-contained pictures - what D.A. Wright has aptly called "transposed descriptions"¹⁰ - only returning to the initial comparison at the end. (Helen Gardner says that such a simile is "like a balloon moored at both ends".¹¹)

Others have a compound form, suggesting that something in the poem is like this, or this, or this. Others again are framed in the negative, so that something is presented to us in terms of what it is not like. This last type is important since, as both Ricks and Helen Gardner have pointed out, the sense of unlikeness also underlies many of those similes which formally indicate likeness - in Ricks's words, "we cannot do without a sense of disparity as well as of similarity in Milton's similes".¹²

Turning from the form to the substance of the similes, one finds that most of them - and certainly those which make use of natural details - take a point of physical comparison or contrast as their starting-point: the rebel angels lie as thickly scattered on the fiery flood as Autumnal Leaves, and as they rise from it they look like "a pitchy cloud/Of Locusts"; Satan in his faded splendour appears like a newly-risen sun seen through mist; the Imperial Ensign of Hell shines "like a Meteor streaming to the Wind".¹³ All these examples are taken from the first two books, and it is instructive to note both that the greatest concentration of similes occurs here, and that most of the similes from later books are also applied to Satan. Similes are not used at all in the presentation of the Father and the Son, and only sparingly in the account of Adam and Eve and the Garden of Eden. If one of the functions of the device is to convey visual impressions, then the reasons for this are clear: the Godhead cannot be visualized, and it would be improper to suggest any comparison - whether like or unlike - between the deity and the objects of the

created world; earth and its inhabitants, though unfallen and therefore unlike our own experience, are much closer to the things we know; but Hell and its creatures, though beyond our comprehension, can be made accessible to our imagination by means of physical comparison.

But although physical similarity and disparity is the most obvious test of the relevance of a simile, very few of the similes are limited to this area of relevance. One of the only pure examples is the account of Satan's spear:-

to equal which the tallest Pine
Hewn on Norwegian hills, to be the Mast
Of some great Ammiral, were but a wand.
(Book I, ll. 292-4)

This is a good instance of the like and unlike technique: the size of the devil's weapon cannot be adequately measured by the largest object of similar shape which our earthly experience offers. Immediately before these lines there is a simile which begins as a physical comparison, but which almost at once moves away from this initial purpose. Milton is describing Satan's shield:-

the broad circumference
Hung on his shoulders like the Moon, whose Orb
Through Optic Glass the Tuscan Artist views
At Ev'ning from the top of Fesole,
Or in Valdarno, to descry new Lands,
Rivers or Mountains in her spotty Globe.
(ll. 286-291)

The shield is broad and round like the moon, which suggests the vast size of the satellite thought of objectively as a material body. But suddenly the relevance of the comparison as an image of size and weight is lost as the moon is distanced and gazed at from far off through Galileo's telescope. The continuing relevance of the simile

must be sought in other areas of significance. Galileo's discovery that there are mountains on the moon had theological as well as scientific consequences: the "spotty Globe" provided evidence of corruption above the circle of the moon, and so cast doubt on the traditional conception of the nature of the universe.¹⁴ The moon has become an image not only of Satan's size, but also of his corruption. If one considers the wider context of the simile, other details take on significance. Satan has just reared himself from the burning lake and is moving towards the shore, so that he is getting his first view of his new kingdom: he, like Galileo, describes the "new Lands/Rivers or Mountains" of a corrupt realm. Taking the simile in the wider context still of the whole poem, we should perhaps think also of those other "new Lands" on earth, which will in their turn be corrupted and become another "spotty Globe". This "subterranean virtue", as C.S. Lewis has called it, is the key to the relevance of the majority of the similes in Paradise Lost.¹⁵ An initial point of comparison, usually physical, is an excuse for the exploration of moral and theological implications which reach out into the wider themes of the poem. Each of the examples of physical comparison given earlier contains these extensions of moral significance. The defeated devils lie:-

Thick as Autumnal Leaves that strow the Brooks
In Vallombrosa, where th'Etrurian shades
High overarch't imbrow'r.

Numerous associations, stressing likeness and unlikeness, come together in these three lines. The splendour of the former angels

has withered and faded like autumn leaves; they, too, lie in shades beneath the dark vault of Hell, in a shady valley very different from the lovely surroundings of Vallombrosa; the very word "imbow'r" suggests an ironic contrast with the bower of pain in which they are imprisoned; the whole image is probably a deliberate reminiscence of Dante's infernal spirits, numberless as autumn leaves (Inferno, III, 112-114). The logical comparison, "Thick as Autumnal Leaves", gives place to ideas which work at deeper levels of the imagination. The same process is evident in the locust simile:-

As when the potent Rod
Of Amram's Son in Egypt's evil day
Wav'd round the Coast, up call'd a pitchy cloud
Of Locusts, warping on the Eastern Wind,
That o'er the Realm of impious Pharaoh hung
Like Night, and darken'd all the Land of Nile:
So numberless were those bad Angels seen
Hovering on wing under the Cope of Hell.

The devils are like the locusts not just in their physical mass, hovering and cutting off the light - this in itself has symbolic connotations, as part of the traditional light-dark imagery of the poem - but also in their moral character as despoilers of plenty and punishers of wrong. The likening of Satan to the sun seen through mist is one element in a compound simile:-

As when the Sun new ris'n
Looks through the Horizontal misty Air
Shorn of his Beams, or from behind the Moon
In dim Eclipse disastrous twilight sheds
On half the Nations, and with fear of change
Perplexes Monarchs. Dark'n'd so, yet shone
Above them all th' Arch-Angel.

As with the locust simile, the mooring of the comparison at the end -

"So numberless", "Dark'n'd so" - insists on the physical logic, but belies the much wider relevance of the "digression" in the body of the simile. Satan, like the eclipse, is an omen of disaster for mankind. Adam, the Monarch of the earth, will undergo a fearful change as a result of the baleful influence of the eclipsed Arch-Angel.

In the examples discussed so far, the concept of relevance has broadened considerably. At least three functions for the simile have emerged, connecting its details in a variety of ways with the wider purposes of the poem. Firstly, in the words of Helen Gardner, the simile is one solution to the great problem posed by the nature of Milton's material: "how to convey imaginatively what 'surmounts the reach of human sense', how to describe without describing and to preserve in us the sense that what he tells us is both true and a fiction".¹⁶ Satan's spear is like the Norwegian pine, but inconceivably greater; the fallen angels are as numberless as autumn leaves and swarming locusts. Secondly, the "subterranean virtue" of the Miltonic simile enables the poet to underpin his physical descriptions with moral and theological commentary, so that in Satan's eclipsed beauty can be glimpsed an omen of his evil influence over mankind. And thirdly, many of the similes serve the artistic structure as well as the moral argument of the epic by looking forward to later developments in the story. As Ricks puts it, they "very often predict the Fall",¹⁷ as when the locusts "dark'n'd all the Land of Nile" in anticipation of the invasion of earth by the powers of darkness as a consequence of Adam's sin. There is a fourth function, related to the

first: that of providing what Lerner calls "a sense of context". In a long poem containing only two human figures, and these for the bulk of the story unlike ourselves in being sinless, the reader needs some means of placing what happens in relation to his own experience. The similes, drawing upon the familiar sights and activities of the natural and human life around us, help, as Louis Martz says, "to settle us within a world we know".¹⁸

An analysis of two more examples must serve to demonstrate further the "continuous relevance", in one or more of these ways, of Milton's handling of the epic simile. At the end of the "Stygian Council" the devils rise up "rejoicing in their matchless Chief":-

As when from mountain tops the dusky clouds
Ascending, while the North wind sleeps, o'erspread
Heav'n's cheerful face, the low'ring Element
Scowls o'er the dark'n'd lantskip Snow, or show'r;
If chance the radiant Sun with farewell sweet
Extend his ev'ning beam, the fields revive,
The birds thir notes renew, and bleating herds
Attest thir joy, that hill and valley rings.

(Book II, ll. 488-495)

This is an obvious case of the "transposed description", in which a complete picture is painted with vivid detail within the confines of the formal simile. B.A. Wright is correct in stating that "there is no logical connexion between the minds of devils and an evening landscape", but he is misleading when he goes on to claim that there are no "points of comparison" and that "The simile moves straight to its proper task of description, a vivid description of a mental experience transposed into quite other but familiar terms".¹⁹ A few lines before this Milton has described the rising of the assembled devils: "Thir

rising all at once was as the sound/Of Thunder heard remote" (ll. 476-7). They, like the "dusky clouds" at the start of the simile, ascend to applaud their leader, just as they have earlier risen in rebellion and "o'erspread/Heav'n's cheerful face", and just as they will, in time to come, scowl "o'er the dark'n'd lantskip" of the fallen earth. The very terms in which the description is framed - "cheerful face", "low'ring", "Scowls" - aids the identification of the natural scene and the aspect and character of the defeated angels, as does the earlier likening of them to "Thunder heard remote". This first half of the simile works by likeness; the second half works by unlikeness. On earth the darkened sky can give way to the "farewell sweet" of evening sunshine, which revives for a while the idyllic joy of pastoral scenery. But although the devils may feel joy of a kind in their plan for revenge, to compare their state of mind with the peaceful radiance described in the simile can only be an ironic comment on their real situation, surrounded by "many a dark and dreary Vale . . . Rocks, Caves, Lakes, Fens, Bogs, Dens, and shades of death" (Book II, ll. 618-622). Milton elsewhere mocks at them in this way. In the simile of the bees, the insects "among fresh dews and flowers/Fly to, and fro" (Book I, ll. 758-775). The devils may also fly to and fro, but in far different physical circumstances. The ironic mockery becomes even more obvious when the bees are said to "expatiate and confer/Thir State affairs". The majestic devils are reduced by the simile to a swarm of buzzing, self-important insects, just as they are physically reduced in size a few lines later so that they

can all crowd into their new palace of Pandaemonium.²⁰

The other example is a simile which has greatly exercised the critics.²¹ Satan has been discovered by the angelic guard crouching at the ear of Eve in the shape of a toad, and has been surrounded by Gabriel and his band:-

With ported Spears, as thick as when a field
Of Ceres ripe for harvest waving bends
Her bearded Grove of ears, which way the wind
Sways them; the careful Plowman doubting stands
Lest on the threshing floor his hopeful sheaves
Prove chaff. (Book IV, ll. 980-985)

The initial physical comparison soon gives place to more profound implications, which relate this incident to the subsequent developments of the narrative and the moral argument. The "hopeful sheaves" of both parties - with their suggestions of things coming to fruition and being harvested - are in the balance at this moment: Satan with his plot for revenge, and the good angels with their new ward of man. Man does, in the event, "Prove chaff", and so do Satan's hopes as his scheme rebounds against him with the redeeming sacrifice of Christ.

2. Traditional Symbols.

In the similes, formal comparisons and contrasts are made between the events and figures in the story and the familiar world of nature. Many more details from nature occur as elements in the narrative itself. By far the largest group of such images are those of light and darkness.²² The seventeenth century was obsessed with the effects and properties of light: on the one hand the artists, following the example of Caravaggio,²³ were exploring its aesthetic possibilities; on the other the scientists were making discoveries about its

With living Sapphires: Hesperus that led
 The starry Host, rode brightest, till the Moon
 Rising in clouded Majesty, at length
 Apparent Queen unveil'd her peerless light,
 And o'er the dark her Silver Mantle threw.
 (ll. 598-609)

The primary purpose of these passages is to settle the reader firmly in the imaginative context of the earth, after the strange and timeless theatre of Hell, Chaos, and Heaven in which the story has thus far been acted out. In Satan's kingdom there was "No light, but rather darkness visible" (Book I, l. 63); God the Father, "Dark with excessive bright", had dwelt "invisible/Amidst the glorious brightness" (Book III, ll. 375-80); at last, after straining his imagination at these inconceivable extremes, the reader is confronted by the familiar scenes of earthly sunset and star-rise, and feels, with the comforting sense of recognition, that he has come home to a world that he knows. Milton achieves this effect by subtly altering his method of description through the three passages. In the first, the viewpoint is still cosmic, following on from the account of Satan's approach to the globe of the earth at the end of Book III. The sun, the earth with its "Ocean Isles", and the stars are felt as parts of a vast system changing their positions relative to each other. This sense of a vast cosmic process still pervades the second passage, until at the close we are placed in paradise with the rays of the setting sun streaming towards us through the eastern gate. In the third passage, we view the changing pageant of the heavens from a limited earthly perspective. "Still Ev'ning" only comes on earth -

it is not apparent from the cosmic point of view; and "all things" can only be said to be clad in the "sober Livery" of twilight if the force of "all" is restricted to the perspective of the human observer. The glowing firmament is now above us, and the moon's pre-eminence among the "starry Host" is dependent on our position on the surface of the earth.

Another significant feature of these descriptive passages is the sense of harmony that prevails. Light and darkness seem to cooperate with each other to effect the beautiful changes that take place on earth. The stars rise to "usher Evening"; the moon throws her protective "Silver Mantle" over the darkness, so that the dark does not become absolute and oppressive. Philip Brockbank has remarked very perceptively that "It is a central mystery of the phenomenal world and of our metaphoric thinking that light and darkness seem to be both complementary and contending essences".²⁶ The darkness of Hell is pitted against the radiance of Heaven; but on the unfallen earth there is no trace of this contest, as night and day alternate and merge into each other with perfect concord, enhancing each other's beauty. Milton does exploit the traditional symbolic values of light and darkness extensively in his poem, as he had in Comus: light is good, darkness is evil; light is wisdom and inspiration, darkness is ignorance - "What in me is dark/Illumine" (Book I, ll. 22-3), "thou Celestial Light/Shine inward" (Book III, ll. 51-2), prays the poet. But, with extraordinary tact and insight, he allows no hint of this symbolic interpretation in Adam's response

to his prelapsarian environment. To the unfallen man light and darkness are equally gifts of a gracious Creator, "since God hath set/Labor and rest, as day and night to men/Successive" (Book IV, ll. 612-14). Eve, in her lovely evening hymn, makes no distinction of quality between the two:-

Sweet is the breath of morn, her rising sweet,
With charm of earliest Birds; pleasant the Sun
When first on this delightful Land he spreads
His orient Beams.

.
and sweet the coming on
Of grateful Ev'ning mild, then silent Night
With this her solemn Bird and this fair Moon,
And these the Gems of heav'n, her starry train.
(Book IV, ll. 641-9)

Adam's morning prayer ends with an image in which the symbolism of good and evil is potential, but it is part of Milton's technique of manipulating the reader's fallen habits of mind that Adam intends no such connotations:-

Witness if I be silent, Morn or Even,
To Hill, or Valley, Fountain, or fresh shade
Made vocal by my Song, and taught his praise.
Hail universal Lord, be bounteous still
To give us only good; and if the night
Have gather'd aught of evil or conceal'd,
Disperse it, as now light dispels the dark.

(Book V, ll. 202-8)

Stanley E. Fish's commentary on these lines is excellent:-

It is impossible to read this without substituting good for light and evil for dark, but Adam is merely reaching for an analogy in nature (he looks up and sees it happening; had it been evening the thought might have been reversed) and the fact that he hits upon the symbolism of fallen moral discourse is an accident.²⁷

The same critic notes other discrepancies between our habitual response to natural details, learned as part of the symbolism of a

postlapsarian culture, and the kind of response appropriate in a world untainted by sin. The peacock, "whose gay Train/Adorns him", traditional emblem of vanity; the insects "In all the Liveries deckt of Summer's pride" and the swan, "her white wings mantling proudly"; do we recognize, "at once, without reflection, that here pride is permissible and good because it is pride in one's nature as God ordained it, and therefore a praise of God?"²⁸ Most telling of all, in the list of creatures brought forth on the sixth day of the Creation, is "The Serpent subtl'st Beast of all the field". This serpent is not evil; its subtlety is a positive quality with which it has been endowed by a benevolent Maker, who judges the entire Creation "how good, how fair,/Answering his great Idea" (Book VII, ll. 556-7). Only the reader, cursed in his knowledge of the Fall and its consequences, brings inappropriate moral responses to bear on the description of this creature. It is by exploiting traditional material in this way that the poet brings home to us the fallen nature of our own minds, and demonstrates that Adam's Fall is ours. We have truly lost paradise because we cannot respond to it as it deserves.

Apart from the all-pervading light-dark symbolism, the most significant group of traditional images are those which associate Adam and Eve's life in the Garden with flowers, and above all with roses. One of the rhythmic movements in the first description of paradise in Book IV comes to a superb climax with the line: "Flow'rs of all hue, and without Thorn the Rose" (l. 256). All the traditional connotations of the rose in literature come flooding into the poem at

this point, as the onward march of the verse is stopped momentarily while the mind registers the full impact of that final phrase.²⁹ Marvell had played longingly with the fancy that Little T.C. might "roses of their thorns disarm". Here, in this first Garden, such a wish is unnecessary. This eternal Spring has no "imperfections". Roses have no hurtful thorns, nor do they fade: when Adam and Eve retire to their bower at night "on thir naked limbs the flow'ry roof/ Show'r'd Roses, which the Morn repair'd" (Book IV, ll. 772-3). These roses of innocent consummation are "repair'd" by the morning; they do not blow and wither like the roses of fallen passion.

Even before she has been introduced into the poem in person, Eve has been associated with flowers and identified as herself a flower in one of Milton's finest similes. The Garden of Eden far surpasses all the gardens famed in literature:-

Not that fair field
Of Enna, where Proserpin gath'ring flow'rs
Herself a fairer Flow'r by gloomy Dis
Was gather'd. (Book IV, ll. 268-71)

Eve, too, spends her time in paradise tending the flowers, and she, too, will be plucked and despoiled of her innocence by an intruder from the infernal regions. Later, in Book IX, when she and Adam are discussing their labours in the Garden, she says that she, working apart from Adam, will, "In yonder Spring of Roses intermixt/With Myrtle, find what to redress till Noon" (ll. 218-9). It is in just this situation that Satan finds her:-

Eve separate he spies,
Veil'd in a Cloud of Fragrance, where she stood,

Half spi'd, so thick the Roses bushing round
 About her glow'd, oft stooping to support
 Each Flow'r of slender stalk, whose head though gay
 Carnation, Purple, Azure, or speckt with Gold,
 Hung drooping unsustain'd, then she upstays
 Gently with Myrtle band, mindless the while,
 Herself, though fairest unsupported Flow'r,
 From her best prop so far, and storm so nigh.
 (Book IX, ll. 424-32)

Fragile as a flower "of slender stalk" which needs to be propped by the strength of Adam - earlier she has been associated with the ivy and the woodbine, both traditional symbols of the reliance of the female on the male in a mutual love-bond (see Book IX, ll. 215-17) - she will be the first of all flowers to be gathered by Satan, another "gloomy Dis".

Adam, meanwhile, has been weaving, "Of choicest Flow'rs a Garland to adorn/Her Tresses, and her rural labors crown" (Book IX, ll. 840-1). When she returns, and blithely tells him that she has tasted the forbidden fruit, "From his slack hand the Garland wreath'd for Eve/Down dropp'd, and all the faded Roses shed" (ll. 892-3). Eve is crowned indeed, with a wreath of withered flowers. These flowers are not only the first that ever faded, but contain in them "all the faded Roses" of a future tainted by sin and governed by decay and death, "all the faded Roses" of the tradition of literary symbolism which gives these lines their power and pathos. The bitter and poignant symbolism is carried through into Adam's horrified speech, as he realises what Eve has done: "How art thou lost, how on a sudden lost,/ Defac't, deflow'r'd, and now to Death devote?" (ll. 900-1). All the future instances of spoiled innocence, in a world of postlapsarian

sexuality, are caught up in that one word - "deflow'r'd".

It is of her flowers that Eve thinks first when Michael informs the fallen pair that they are to be banished from the Garden:-

O flow'rs,
That never will in other Climate grow,
My early visitation, and my last
At Ev'n, which I bred up with tender hand
From the first op'ning bud, and gave ye Names,
Who now shall rear ye to the Sun, or rank
Your Tribes, and water from th'ambrosial Fount?
(Book XI, ll. 273-9)

The flowers were her children, her special care: she gave them names, just as Adam gave names to the creatures which were put under his dominion at the Creation. Such flowers as she tended in paradise "never will" grow in any other climate. Henceforth they will all share in the general fate of transience and mutability. They are Milton's most potent symbol, because throughout the poem they have been associated with the paradisaal state for which all men yearn and because they have received infusions of imaginative power from age-old literary traditions, which have sought to recapture that lost paradise and reflect the consequences of its loss.

3. The Mighty Frame: the Universe of Paradise Lost.

The basic matter of Milton's story necessitated some conception of the physical structure of the universe. We have already seen, in one of the similes, that he was acquainted with contemporary developments in astronomy. He mentions Galileo's discoveries in two more similes, and indeed visited the ageing scientist during his visit to the continent in 1638-9.³⁰ Milton was interested in all aspects of scientific knowledge - what one critic has called "the whole sweep

of natural phenomena"³¹ - and was well-informed about the current state of the cosmological debate. As Grant McColley has pointed out, there were three other hypotheses available to the mid-seventeenth-century inquirer, besides the Ptolemaic and Copernican, and Milton shows a grasp of all but one of the five possible versions of the universe.³² But it would have been improper, in a religious epic which he claimed was inspired by the Holy Spirit, to offer any one explanation as an objective fact. John Peter, in his attempt to denigrate Milton's achievement, reveals a complete failure to understand the purpose of the astronomical discussion between Adam and Raphael in Book VIII. The angel, he declares, "is scarcely even lucid" in his account of the cosmos:-

Here he is all too human - conjecturing, going back on his conjectures, and then throwing up the subject with a moral rider to hide his bewilderment and ineffectuality:

Sollicit not thy thoughts with matters hid. (viii. 167)
A fair comment would be that he has himself been soliciting Adam's thoughts on the subject for upwards of fifty involved lines.³³

It is precisely in the moral rider that the significance of the whole debate is to be found. Adam has been slightly misusing his faculty of reason. It is right and good for man to inquire into the things around him: it is the ability to do this which raises him above the beasts. But it is wrong for him to question the wisdom of the Creator simply because human reason cannot fathom the mysteries of the universe. This is what Adam has been doing:-

reasoning I oft admire,
How Nature wise and frugal could commit

Such disproportions, with superfluous hand
 So many nobler Bodies to create,
 Greater so manifold to this one use,
 For aught appears, and on thir Orbs impose
 Such restless revolution day by day.
 (Book VIII, ll. 25-31)

Raphael picks up the word "admire", and points out that there are two kinds of admiration:-

This to attain, whether Heav'n move or Earth,
 Imports not, if thou reck'n right; the rest
 From Man or Angel the great Architect
 Did wisely to conceal, and not divulge
 His secrets to be scann'd by them who ought
 Rather admire. (ll. 70-75)

The proper attitude of the creature is not to admire, in the sense of wondering and doubting and trying to find out God's reasons, but to stand in amazement and gratitude before the incomprehensible miracle of the universe. Raphael drives the point home by raising conjectures which had not even occurred to Adam, emphasising how far beyond the reach of the reasoning mind these mysteries are, and demonstrating that human happiness does not depend on the solution of such problems. "What if", he asks, one or other of the hypotheses is true? Does it make any difference to man's relationship to his Creator? Such information "Imports not, if thou reck'n right".³⁴ The whole debate has a moral, rather than a scientific, purpose.

The cosmology which Milton chose as the imaginative setting for his story was the Ptolemaic, not because this is any more likely to be the correct one than the Copernican or the Tychonian, but because it was ideally suited as an image of his moral conception of the universe. Indeed, an additional function of the debate in Book VIII

is to make it clear that it is only an image, and that other objective explanations may be possible. William G. Madsen puts the matter succinctly:-

The cosmology of Paradise Lost is intimately related to the moral and artistic design of the poem. The great series of contrasts on which the poem is built - creation versus destruction, light versus darkness, order versus disorder - find their objective correlatives in the firm outlines of the Ptolemaic universe, which was "won from the void and formless infinite" (III, 12), and whose limits were "circumscribe [d]" (VII, 266) by the Divine Architect.³⁵

The impression which Milton's universe leaves in the mind is of a vast ordered structure, within which there is an amazing variety of forms and immense energy, manifesting itself in continual and vigorous movement.³⁶ As H.B.C. Watkins has noted, this conception of the universe as the expression of great creative power makes itself felt not only in the overall vision of Heaven, Hell, Chaos, and Earth, but also in the details of the descriptive method: "The sun rarely shines in Milton. He impresses his beams or smites or gently penetrates".³⁷

The most important consequences of the scientific revolution for Milton were in the area of imagination. Marjorie Hope Nicolson suggests that when Milton visited Galileo he looked through the telescope, and that this had a profound effect on his later poetry:-

Unlike Donne, whose mind also was clearly stirred by implications of the "perspective glass", Milton's imagination, I am persuaded, was stimulated less by books about the new astronomy than by the actual sense experience of celestial observation. As almost in one night Galileo saw a new universe, so Milton, having grown up in a world he had placidly accepted from the past, on some occasion "viewed all things at one view" through a telescope.³⁸

She discovers a significant contrast between the early poems and the later. The astronomical references in the Minor Poems, and especially in the discussion between Comus and the Lady about nature, reveal no hint of any deep awareness of the ideas of Galileo, Kepler, Bruno. Whereas all the most important new discoveries - new stars, the moon's "spotty" surface, sunspots, the moons of Jupiter, and so on - are referred to in the later poetry. She goes on to suggest how the new knowledge - and in particular the new experience - influenced Milton's imagination. It opened up to him the vast reaches of space, and radically altered the way in which he looked at, or imagined, things. The two epics contain various views of earthly prospects, and views of the cosmos, seen from different points of vantage. Perhaps no single passage demonstrates more clearly Milton's sense of perspective than that describing Satan's first approach to earth. Satan had been left at the end of his journey through Chaos, just in sight of the created universe, "This pendant world, in bigness as a Star/Of smallest Magnitude close by the Moon" (Book II, ll. 1052-3). When we return to the Arch-Fiend, after the account of the debate in Heaven, he has alighted on the outermost case of the universe:-

a Globe far off
It seem'd, now seems a boundless Continent
Dark, waste, and wild, under the frown of Night
Starless expos'd, and ever-threat'ning storms
Of Chaos blust'ring round, inclement sky.
(Book III, ll. 422-6)

Looking down through the spheres of the universe, he spies the great orb of the sun and makes his way thither:-

then from Pole to Pole
 He views in breadth, and without longer pause
 Down right into the World's first Region throws
 His flight precipitant, and winds with ease
 Through the pure marble Air his oblique way
 Amongst innumerable Stars, that shone
 Stars distant, but nigh hand seem'd other Worlds.

above them all
 The golden Sun in splendor likest Heaven
 Allur'd his eye. (Book III, ll. 560-73)

The shifts in view-point, from the distant to the near, from seeing the globe as a ball to seeing it as a "boundless Continent", from seeing the stars as distant points of light to seeing them as "other worlds" as the devil steers his way through them - all this is an extraordinary feat of imagination. Milton, more than any other English poet of the century, was able to feel and express, in a manner that appeals to the imagination rather than the intellect, the implications of the new astronomy. He is the first great poetic spokesman for the new view of the universe that was to transform man's imaginative grasp on reality. It is a remarkable fact that he achieved this in the course of a poem that set out to demonstrate the truth of a conception of man and the universe that was thousands of years old. Professor Nicolson comments on the new direction in which Milton extended the frontiers of human imagination. Referring to Masson's dictum that Shakespeare lived in a world of Time and Milton in a universe of space, she writes:-

The distinction which Professor Masson felt is the distinction between two worlds - the old and the new; and the profound difference arises from the seventeenth-century awareness of the immensity of space.³⁹

4. Hesperian Fables True: the Garden of Eden.

Paradise itself, the Garden planted by God in the east of Eden, presents another set of problems for the poet. It is closer to our ordinary human experience - like the nature we know, yet unlike it in being unfallen. There were many sources on which Milton could draw for his description of it, and scholars have been at pains ^{to} press their various claims: the Biblical account in Genesis; ⁴⁰ the Renaissance commentaries on Genesis; ⁴¹ accounts of contemporary tropical paradises in travellers' tales and the work of geographers and map-makers; ⁴² various precedents in imaginative literature, such as the pastoral Golden Age and the popular topos of the Eternal Spring. ⁴³ Paradise is one of the great archetypes. Milton's task was to create, for minds bred in the cultural traditions embodied in these sources, what Arnold Stein has called "an image of the archetype", while at the same time "maintaining the ultimate impossibility of the image of the real archetype". ⁴⁴ In order to do this he could not afford, as T.S. Eliot recognized, to be too detailed in his description. ⁴⁵ The Garden of Eden is not like any garden we have known, but at the same time we all have an ideal conception of what it might have been like, derived from our reading, our own experience of nature, and perhaps our own idealised memories of childhood - our nearest approach to the state of innocence. As J.B. Broadbent has written, in what is the most stimulating treatment of this subject, Milton was attempting "not to force on us the personal paradisaical vision of one man, but rather to distil to an essence all the variegated conceptions that

men have ever held of Paradise".⁴⁶

The first view of the Garden is provided when Satan approaches it after his journey from Hell:-

And higher than that Hall a circling row
Of goodliest Trees loaden with fairest Fruit,
Blossoms and Fruits at once of golden hue
Appear'd, with gay enamell'd colors mixt:
On which the Sun more glad impress'd his beams
Than in fair Evening Cloud, or humid Bow,
When God hath show'r'd the earth; so lovely seem'd
That Lantskip: And of pure now purer air
Meets his approach, and to the heart inspires
Vernal delight and joy, able to drive
All sadness but despair.

(Book IV, ll. 146-156)

It is all presented in the most general terms - the "goodliest Trees", the "fairest Fruit", blossoms and fruits growing together as in many an earthly paradise,⁴⁷ and of "gay enamell'd colors". There is only one specific detail, about which C.S. Lewis aptly remarked: "Of course, the trees have golden fruit. We always knew they would".⁴⁸ Milton hit on the brilliant device of allowing us our first glimpse of paradise through the eyes of Satan, so that we rise towards it from the depths of Hell and Chaos, and feel with him the refreshing, blessed relief of the wafts of "pure now purer air". And then, in the last three lines quoted above, with one of those superb shifts of perspective which we have seen elsewhere in the poem, we are dissociated from the Hellish experience of the evil intruder and are permitted to enjoy the "Vernal delight" in our own way. The cool breezes meet "his approach", but they inspire "the heart" - the heart not of Satan but of any man who has within him dreams of the lost Garden. The dissocia-

tion is completed in the final phrase: it is Satan who is in a state of "despair", and who can therefore not fully respond to the joys of Eden.

A few lines later, Milton gives us a more expansive description:-

But rather tell how, if Art could tell,
 How from that Sapphire Fount the crisped Brooks,
 Rolling on Orient Pearl and sands of Gold,
 With mazy error under pendant shades
 Ran Nectar, visiting each plant, and fed
 Flow'rs worthy of Paradise which not nice Art
 In Beds and curious Knots, but Nature boon
 Pour'd forth profuse on Hill and Dale and Plain,
 Both where the morning Sun first warily smote
 The open field, and where the unpierc'd shade
 Imbrown'd the noontide Bow'rs: Thus was this place,
 A happy rural seat of various view:
 Groves whose rich Trees wept odorous Gums and Balm,
 Others whose fruit burnish'd with Golden Rind
 Hung amiable, Hesperian Fables true,
 If true, here only, and of delicious taste:
 Betwixt them Lawns, or level Downs, and Flocks
 Grazing the tender herb, were interpos'd,
 Or palmy hillock, or the flow'ry lap
 Of some irriguous Valley spread her store,
 Flow'rs of all hue, and without Thorn the Rose:
 Another side, umbrageous Grotts and Caves
 Of cool recess, o'er which the mantling Vine
 Lays forth her purple Grape, and gently creeps
 Luxuriant; meanwhile murmuring waters fall
 Down the slope hills, disperst, or in a Lake,
 That to the fringed Bank with Myrtle crown'd,
 Her crystal mirror holds, unite their streams;
 The Birds thir choir apply; airs, vernal airs,
 Breathing the smell of field and grove, attune
 The trembling leaves, while Universal Pan
 Knit with the Graces and the Hours in dance
 Led on th'Eternal Spring.

(Book IV, ll. 236-268)

In this magnificent passage Milton is outdoing the many extravagant pictures of earthly paradises in previous literature. One of his most effective - and most characteristic - devices for achieving an

impression of almost overwhelming abundance is the vigorous forward movement of the verse. The fine shock of the simple phrase "and without Thorn the Rose", coming as it does at the climax of a rhythmic unit, has already been discussed. Somewhat similar is the positioning of the short, emphatic summary: "Thus was this place,/A happy rural seat of various view". It provides a pause, in which to take stock of the astonishing profusion, after the relentless surging flow of the verse from line 223 to line 246, an amazingly articulated sentence broken only by a single semi-colon, which is immediately followed by a "thence", impelling the meaning onward before the reader can catch his breath (l. 230). The rhythm also seems to demand a stress on "was", as if to insist that such a miracle of plenty and richness did once exist, though now scarcely conceivable to the fallen imagination.

The details that Milton brings together - the streams running nectar and the pearls and gold in their beds, the shady bowers and cool grotts and caves, the golden fruit, the trees weeping gums and balm, the crystal mirror of the lake - were culled from a long literary tradition.⁴⁹ Milton expects us to notice this, and to recognize the difference between his paradise and all other literary gardens.⁵⁰ Just as the Garden of Eden far surpasses the formal gardens, with their "Beds and curious Knots", produced by "nice Art",⁵¹ so it is beyond the power of poetry to describe. He demurs at the outset, "if Art could tell". This is part of his strategy for "maintaining the ultimate impossibility" of presenting an "image of the real archetype". The sense of something quite beyond the reach of words to

express is increased by the superbly evasive phrase: "Flow'rs worthy of Paradise". All he can hope to do is to offer what Arnold Stein has termed "a frankly "literary" demonstration of Paradise".⁵² He triumphantly asserts the pre-eminence of his Garden in the reference to the famous gardens of antiquity: "Hesperian Fables true,/If true, here only". The gardens of literature have been only "fables", created by the imagination; Milton, by virtue of his divine subject, has the advantage of truth. If the hyperboles of the poets could ever have been true, then they were true of Paradise, the garden before the Fall. Here, and here only, despite the poets, was there really an "Eternal Spring", governed directly by "Universal Pan". Milton can claim a context in which poetic fictions may be accepted as an image of the truth.

Each item in his description is animated by the love and sympathy of the parts for the whole which existed before the intrusion of hostility that followed the Fall. The streams are seen as actively "visiting each plant", and almost consciously feeding the flowers; the lap of each valley "spread her store" for all to enjoy; the vine "layes forth her purple Grape", as if offering it; the lake "her crystal mirror holds" to the bank. Everything is harmony, gentleness, and mutual love. In much previous poetry such animation of the landscape was merely decorative; here it serves to body forth Milton's moral conception of an innocent world. Time and again, in Paradise Lost, he is able to capitalize on his unique subject matter to extort an extra significance from the details and methods made familiar by

poetic tradition.

Another conventional feature of the bravura description is present in the image of the "noontide Bow'rs", and in the "Grots" and "crystal mirror" and choir of birds: that of depicting natural objects as if they were the products of civilization. This device is even more apparent in the account of the "blissful Bower" to which Adam and Eve retire at nightfall:-

each beauteous flow'r,
Iris all hues, Roses, and Jessamin
 Rear'd high thir flourisht heads between, and wrought
 Mosaic; underfoot the Violet,
 Crocus, and Hyacinth with rich inlay
 Broider'd the ground, more color'd than with stone
 Of costliest Emblem. (Book IV, ll. 697-703)

G. Wilson Knight objects to this "deliberating aestheticism", which translates "the natural into terms of human artistry", because it gives an impression of nature as mere "static art".⁵³ The word "static" scarcely seems appropriate for the scenes full of movement and energy, in which the sun "warmly smote/The open field", the grape "gently creeps/Luxuriant", the waters fall, disperse their streams, and then unite again in a lake, the flowers "rear'd high" their heads, and actively "wrought/Mosaic". But quite apart from this failure to recognize the continuous motion which characterizes Milton's Paradise - he also uses the phrase "a stony, carven immobility" - Wilson Knight misses the purpose of the Nature-as-Art device in Milton's hands. Nature before the Fall may be "Wild above Rule of Art" (Book V, l. 297), but this does not mean that life in the Garden is primitive. God provides for man all the luxuries and necessities

of civilized life without the intervention of art. When Adam and Eve dine, for example, the natural abundance provides not only their "Supper Fruits", but also their furniture: "Rais'd of grassy turf/Thir Table was, and mossy seats had round" (Book V, ll. 391-2).⁵⁴ The Garden of Eden was designed as a habitation for man. As Milton insists, the Bower was made by God himself, "when he fram'd/All things to man's delightful use". Adam has no need to "square and hew", like the architects of Marvell's 'Dialogue'; everything is arranged naturally to meet his needs. J.D. Broadbent puts it flatly: "It is a world where Nature is Art".⁵⁵

5. Six Days' work, a World: The Creation.

The account of the creation in Book VII is another of Milton's tours de force, as he works, in Helen Gardner's words, "exquisite variations on a classic theme".⁵⁶ This is another of those events which are beyond human comprehension, and which "to human ears/Cannot without process of speech be told" (ll. 177-8). One of his chief methods is again to exploit words in a tradition, rather than to attempt an exact physical description. For example, in his account of the division of the land from the waters:-

Immediately the Mountains huge appear
Emergent, and thir broad bare backs upheave
Into the Clouds, thir tops ascend the Sky:
So high as heav'd the tumid Hills, so low
Down sunk a hollow bottom broad and deep,
Capacious bed of Waters: thither they
Hasted with glad precipitance, uproll'd
As drops on dust conglobing from the dry;
Part rise in crystal Wall, or ridge direct,
For haste; such flight the great command impress'd
On the swift floods. (ll. 285-95)

Phrases like "thir . . . backs upheave", "thir tops ascend the Sky", the sea "Down sunk" are commonplace in descriptions of mountains and oceans. But usually they are metaphorical. In this case, the verbs "upheave", "ascend", "sunk" carry their full active significance. The manipulation of the reader's response operates at a sophisticated verbal level, as well as on a sensuous, or visual, plane. We are surely intended to notice the contrast between the meaning of the words here, and their conventional meaning in poetic descriptions, and in so doing to grasp something of the wonder of what is being depicted.

Similarly with the third Day's creation:-

He scarce had said, when the bare Earth, till then
Desert and bare, unsightly, unadorn'd,
Brought forth the tender Grass, whose verdure clad
Her Universal Face with pleasant green,
Then Herbs of every leaf, that sudden flow'r'd
Op'ning thir various colers, and made gay
Her bosom smelling sweet: and these scarce blown,
Forth flourish'd thick the clust'ring Vine, forth crept
The smelling Gourd, up stood the corny Reed
Embattl'd in her field: and th'humble Shrub,
And Bush with frizzl'd hair implicit: last
Rose as in Dance the stately Trees, and spread
Thir branches hung with copious Fruit: or gemm'd
Thir Blossoms: with high Woods the Hills were crown'd,
With tufts the valleys and each fountain side,
With borders long the Rivers. (ll. 313-28)

Many a description of spring had spoken of the greenery clothing the bare earth, and fruit loaded the boughs of many a poetic summer; but in Milton's poem all this constitutes a process that can be seen happening suddenly. When the trees rose, they rose literally out of the ground; they literally spread their branches; the hills were

crowned as an act, like the placing of a crown on a king's head; the plants "sudden flow'r'd". Bentley emended line 321 to read "the swelling Gourd", which saves the repetition of the word from line 319 and fits the detail into the overall dynamic vision - the participle would have its full force as a verb, not simply its weaker adjectival function.

The animals, too, are seen in the very moment of being created:-

The grassy Clods now Calv'd, now half appear'd
 The Tawny Lion, pawing to get free
 His hinder parts, then springs as broke from Bonds,
 And Rampant shakes his Brinded mane; the Ounce,
 The Libbard, and the Tiger, as the Mole
 Rising, the crumbl'd Earth above them threw
 In Hillocks; the swift Stag from under ground
 Bore up his branching head. (ll. 463-70)

The brilliant picture of the lion tearing itself free of the earth culminates in the verbal play on "Rampant", and the process is suddenly related to a known natural occurrence, that of the mole appearing from underground. An insistence on the full meaning of a word that is usually limited is seen again in the "branching" of the stag's head: as he is created, the antlers literally grow from his crown. Here, as in the whole Creation sequence, Milton evinces an extraordinary feeling of movement, vigour, and variety.⁵⁷ As W.D.C. Watkins aptly says, "Some of his creatures cannot wait to be fully born before displaying energy".⁵⁸ He covers the entire range of the plenitude of life, from "Behemoth biggest born of Earth" (l. 471) to the "Parsimonious Emmet" (l. 485). Every part of the created world swarms with life - a fact superbly conveyed by the crowded syntax of the lines: "Air, Water, Earth,/By Fowl, Fish, Beast, was flown, was swum, was walkt/Frequent" (ll. 502-4).

The most powerful single experience to be gathered from Book VII is that of wonder and amazement at the glory, wisdom, and omnipotence of God.⁵⁹ Paradise Lost points forward to the long physico-theological poems of the eighteenth century - such as Blackmore's Creation - which also looked in wonder at the works of the Creator. But none of Milton's many predecessors or followers utilized the full resources of the language and imagery of the Genesis tradition as he did;⁶⁰ none felt the force of words and images, not just as single, self-contained items, but as organic parts of a living tradition, whose associations could be mobilized to produce an experience in which language itself was a major element.

6. Pastoral Hyperbole and Pathetic Fallacy.

Two other familiar devices of seventeenth-century poetry - the pastoral hyperbole and the pathetic fallacy⁶¹ - are employed in the epic with a unique propriety which derives from Milton's conception of the nature of the unfallen universe. The description of the flowers' response to Eve draws upon the convention by which plants stretch lovingly towards some favoured woman, or grow at her approach:-

[Eve] Rose, and went forth among her Fruits and Flow'rs,
To visit how they prosper'd, bud and bloom,
Her Nursery; they at her coming sprung
And toucht by her fair tendance gladlier grew.
(Book VIII, ll. 44-47)

This kind of thing is usually an avowedly exaggerated fantasy - a piece of charming artificiality. But Milton removes much of the fantasy from it by the context in which he puts it: Eve is actively cultivating the flowers, so it is reasonable to claim that they grow

for her. To go a little further, and say that they grew "gladlier" at her touch, strikes as less incredible than the hyperboles of many contemporary poems. The wider context of the whole poem makes the reaction of the flowers - Eve's virtual children, note the potential pun on "Nursery"⁶² - even more "natural". We have seen elsewhere the animation of the landscape as an expression of the harmony that existed between all the creatures of the unfallen world. Milton's conception of the great Chain of Being, whereby all things from stones to angels are linked by mutual love and dependence, is summed up in a simile of organic growth:-

So from the root
Springs lighter the green stalk, from thence the leaves
More aery, last the bright consummate flow'r
Spirits odorous breathes. (Book V, ll. 479-82)

Satan, looking in envy at the earth circled by the orbs of the created universe, declares:-

in thee,
Not in themselves, all thir known virtue appears
Productive in Herb, Plant, and nobler birth
Of Creatures animate with gradual life
Of Growth, Sense, Reason, all summ'd up in Man.
(Book IX, ll. 109-113)

It is this conception of the unity of all things, not as a means of categorizing the items of nature scientifically, but as an expression of the one life that God breathed into his Creation, which gives a special propriety to Milton's use of the pastoral hyperbole.

The same conception informs his handling of the pathetic fallacy, the device by which nature reacts to important events in the human world, joining in man's joy and grief. He stresses the sympathy

between nature and man at several key points in the narrative. Adam relates how he first came upon Eve in the Garden and led her to the "Nuptial Bow'r":-

all Heav'n,
And happy Constellations on that hour
Shed thir selectest influence; the Earth
Gave sign of gratulation, and each Hill;
Joyous the Birds; fresh Gales and gentle Airs
Whisper'd it to the Woods, and from thir wings
Flung Rose, flung Odors from the spicy Shrub,
Disporting, till the amorous Bird of Night
Sung Spousal, and bid haste the Ev'ning Star
On his Hill top, to light the bridal Lamp.

(Book VIII, ll. 511-20)

Before the Fall, if ever, such a bond of sympathy was possible. In all other poems, the pathetic fallacy must be either deliberately artificial, or absorbed into the sensibility of a human speaker, who feels it to be true even though objectively it is not.⁶³ As A.Z. Butler writes, in an interesting study of the place of this device in Paradise Lost:-

Clearly, this is a universe more than merely hospitable to the pathetic fallacy; it is a universe, so to say, conceived in its very image, where the pathetic fallacy becomes archetypal law.⁶⁴

The natural world responds again to the downfall of man. After Eve's transgression, "Earth felt the wound" (Book IX, l. 782); and at the fall of Adam himself:-

Earth trembl'd from her entrails, as again
In pangs, and Nature gave a second groan,
Sky low'r'd, and muttering Thunder, some sad drops
Wept at completing of the mortal Sin
Original. (Book IX, ll. 1000-4)

The events to which nature reacts are here events of great universal

significance, not events of limited individual significance as in the love complaints that so often used this convention. In Milton's unique context, the convention becomes reality. Earth, after all, was itself affected by the consequences of man's action. Towards the end of the story, Adam and Eve see omens of the wider harm wrought by their deed:-

The Bird of Jove, stoopt from his aery tow'r,
 Two Birds of gayest plume before him drove:
 Down from a Hill the Beast that reigns in Woods,
 First hunter then pursu'd a gentle brace,
 Goodliest of all the Forest, Hart and Hind:
 Direct to th'Eastern Gate was bent thir flight.
 (Book XI, ll. 185-90)

The bond which linked all creatures in mutual love no longer holds. Beast begins to prey on beast, and later man will prey on them all. The flight of the deer towards the Eastern Gate of the Garden looks forward to the expulsion of Adam and Eve through this same portal at the end of the poem: all creatures begin to make their way out of the lost paradise.

Milton underlines the breaking of the bond, as the first man and woman wake after their night of debauchery:-

But the Field
 To labor calls us now with sweat impos'd,
 Though after sleepless Night; for see the Morn,
 All unconcern'd with our unrest, begins
 Her rosy progress smiling. (Book XI, ll. 171-5)

This introduces a new note into the poem. For the first time Adam and Eve are isolated sympathetically. Up to this point, nature had always chimed with their mood. Now nature is "unconcern'd" at their sorrow, and goes on its way "smiling". Henceforth, the pathetic

fallacy will be fallacious and the pastoral hyperbole no more than poet's rhetoric.

7. Conclusion.

The natural world for Milton, throughout his career, was a world of harmony, beauty, plenitude, variety, energy. It was, in itself, good. Although the Fall of Man involved nature in its consequences, insofar as it introduced death, transience, the predatory instincts, into the realm of the plants and animals, Milton does not stress the fallen state of nature in the way that men like Godfrey Goodman had done. He has a feeling for the wonder and immensity of the universe, and recognizes the healing influence of the country air for Samson, or for "one who has been long in city pent". Not only early poems like 'L'Allegro', but also passages in his great epic, reveal his delight in the freshness of the natural scene. But although there is abundant evidence, early and late, that he was keenly responsive to the sensuous aspects of nature, especially to the pleasures of varying manifestations of light, and to fresh air, warmth, and shade, Milton experienced nature primarily in terms of a literary tradition. He does not simply write in a tradition, using particular details or particular phraseology without thinking about them. He uses the tradition consciously, often carefully varying it for his own purposes, and expecting his reader to notice the variation. The tradition is a living thing in his poetry, and this means a thing that can be adapted, that can grow in his hands. The Nature of his poetry is an amalgam of literary - classical, scientific, Biblical - and personally

observed and enjoyed details. Words, things, ways of thought and experience, all are inextricably related in his poetic expression of nature, and in his use of natural details for metaphorical ends. In much conventional poetry of his age, details came into the poem almost exclusively through the tradition: they were verbal items rather than real objects. In some early eighteenth-century poetry, the thing observed was what really mattered, and the poet presented it in words as best he could. But in the work of a great poet, there is no such division between the thing as it is in nature and the thing as it has been related in the literature of the past. The complexity of the relationship between natural images and their cultural associations, together with the verbal patterns created to contain them, is a mark of Milton's pre-eminent poetic genius.

NOTES

1. Paradise Lost seems to have been composed between 1658 and 1663-5. It was published in 1667. See James Holly Hanford, A Milton Handbook, 4th. ed. (New York, 1954), pp. 190-1.
2. See, for example, J.B. Broadbent's comments on the pastoral aspects of Milton's Paradise: "It shares with all pastoral an elegiac note anticipating the Fall; but it differs from most pastoral in representing a theological and moral, rather than social or intellectual state of innocence". (Some Graver Subject (London, 1960 and 1967), p. 171.)
3. Philip Brockbank points out that, "In Paradise Lost moral offences are attended by mutations in creation; disobedience first in heaven and then on earth, changes the physical nature of the cosmos and its moral teleology". ("Within the Visible Diurnal Spheare": the Moving World of Paradise Lost", in Approaches to Paradise Lost, The York Tercentenary Lectures, ed. C.A. Patrides (London, 1968), p.213.)
4. Arnold Williams sees the poem as "the most notable product of that definite interest in the beginnings of things which traces its way through the culture of the Renaissance"; and remarks that since the science of the age "was not equipped to furnish an authoritative answer to questions about how things began, theology naturally did supply one". ("Milton and the Renaissance Commentaries on Genesis", Modern Philology, XXXVII, No.3 (1940), p. 278).
5. See the discussion of Marvell's Mower poems, Chapter XII, Section 6.
6. Whaler writes:- "From Homer on, certain images have been part of the epic poet's inheritance and equipment. Not only has he felt obliged to introduce them somewhere into his work, but to distribute them in the very proportion observed by his predecessors. Beasts, plants, any phenomena used in previous epic simile belonged to him, too, if he could make them at home in a new context". ("Animal Similes in Paradise Lost", PMLA, XLVII (1932), p.543.)
7. These words are Masson's, quoted by B.A.Wright in Milton's Paradise Lost (London, 1962 and 1968), pp. 93-4. For discussions of the early critical response to the similes see Chapter 4 of Wright's book, and Chapter 4 of Christopher Ricks's Milton's Grand Style (Oxford, 1963).
8. See especially James Whaler's article, cited n. 6 above, and also his "Compounding and Distribution of Similes in Paradise Lost", Modern Philology, XXVIII, No. 3 (1931), pp.313-27; B.A. Wright, *op. cit.*; Louis L. Martz, The Paradise Within (New Haven and London, 1964), pp. 111-116; and L.D. Lerner, "The Miltonic Simile", Essays in Criticism, IV, No. 3 (1954), pp.297-308.
9. A.J.A. Waldock, Paradise Lost and its Critics (Cambridge, 1947 and 1966), p.143.
10. Wright, *op. cit.*, p.95.

11. Helen Gardner, A Reading of Paradise Lost (Oxford, 1965), p.50.
12. Ricks, op. cit., p.131. See also Helen Gardner, op. cit., p.51:- "Comparison must always involve both likeness and difference. We can no more compare the identical than the wholly different".
13. Paradise Lost, Book I, ll. 302-4, 338-43, 594-9, and 537. All quotations from Paradise Lost are from the Merritt Y. Hughes edition of Milton's Complete Poems and Major Prose (New York, 1957).
14. For a discussion of the philosophical and theological consequences of the astronomical discoveries see above, Chapter II, Section 2.
15. C.S. Lewis, A Preface to Paradise Lost (London, 1942 and 1960), p. 43. Lewis writes:- "The Miltonic simile does not always serve to illustrate what it pretends to be illustrating. The likeness between the two things compared is often trivial, and is, indeed, required only to save the face of the logical censor". (p. 42)
16. Helen Gardner, op. cit., p.51.
17. Ricks, op. cit., p.132.
18. Martz, op. cit., pp.112-3.
19. Wright, op. cit., p.98.
20. Whaler has an interesting discussion of the traditional basis of this simile, citing numerous parallels in Biblical, classical, and Renaissance literature, and pointing out that its originality lies in Milton's trick of suddenly diminishing the devils "before our own eyes". (Article cited in n. 6 above, pp.545-52.)
21. See, for example, William Empson's comments on Bentley's treatment of this simile, in Some Versions of Pastoral (London, 1935 and 1966), pp.140-1.
22. Don Cameron Allen notes that "it is on light and its derivative manifestations that his major imagery rests". (The Harmonious Vision (Baltimore, 1954), p.102.
23. Helen Gardner writes:- "It is one of the oddities of taste that the attack on Milton's dramatic impressionism went on side by side with the recovery of appreciation of the great masters of the baroque style in architecture, sculpture, and painting". (op. cit., p.44)
24. See above, Chapter II, Section 8, for an outline of Newton's work in this field.
25. Gardner, op. cit., p.44.
26. Brockbank, op. cit., p.207.
27. Stanley E. Fish, Surprised by Sin (London and New York, 1967), p.147.
28. *ibid.*, p.157.
29. For an account of the rose image in seventeenth-century poetry see above, Chapter V, Section 2, and Chapter XII, Section 3.
30. For details about Milton's meeting with Galileo see James Holly Hanford, op. cit., Appendix F, pp.404-7, and William Riley Parker, Milton: A Biography (Oxford, 1968), 2 vols., Vol. I, pp.178-9.
31. Kester Svendsen, "Milton and the Encyclopedias of Science",

- Studies in Philology, XXXIX (1942), p.311. Svendsen shows that the encyclopedias form the background of much of Milton's thought. See also his article, "Cosmological Lore in Milton", ELH, IX (1942), pp.198-223, for a survey of "the essential medievalism of Milton's cosmological lore" as it appears in the epic.
32. See Grant McColley, "The Astronomy of Paradise Lost", Studies in Philology, XXXIV (1937), pp.209-247, for a discussion of the general astronomical background of the poem, and "Milton's Dialogue on Astronomy: The Principal Immediate Sources", PMLA, LII (1937), pp.728-762, for an account of Milton's debt to the work of the contemporary astronomers John Wilkins and Alexander Ross.
 33. John Peter, A Critique of Paradise Lost (London and New York, 1960), p.28.
 34. Joseph H. Summers comments very ably on this topic:- "Milton focused the episode on astronomical matters exactly because they provided him with an image of the limitations of human knowledge: of those areas in which (for the first observer or for generations or for all mankind) precise knowledge may be impossible; in which what is obvious to man's senses may not correspond with reality; in which true knowledge may be partial and may therefore make likely a misunderstanding of the whole; in which the abstruse knowledge when gained may prove irrelevant to human life". (The Muse's Method (London, 1962), pp.158-9).
 35. William G. Madsen, "The Idea of Nature in Milton's Poetry", Three Studies in the Renaissance: Sidney, Jonson, Milton (New Haven, 1958), pp.219-220. George Edmundson, in Milton and Vondel (London, 1885), points out that the Dutch poet also uses the Ptolemaic system for poetic purposes, while knowing about more modern theories (pp.41-2).
 36. C.A. Patrides, in his chapter on "The Nature of Nature", considers that "Milton is to be numbered among the principal Renaissance thinkers who expounded the concept of universal order in all its glory". (Milton and the Christian Tradition (Oxford, 1966), p.57.) And W.B.C. Watkins declares:- "In Milton's Universe nothing is at rest except Heaven, earth, and Hell, and even these are giving forth and receiving influences. All else is moving at various speeds, either in complex harmony like the spheres or violent turbulence like Chaos". (From the section on "Creation" in An Anatomy of Milton's Verse (Baton Rouge, La., 1955), reprinted in Milton: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Louis L. Martz (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1966), p.128.
 37. Watkins, *ibid.*, p.130.
 38. Marjorie Hope Nicolson, "Milton and the Telescope", ELH, II (1935), pp.2-3.
 39. *ibid.*, p.18.
 40. See James H. Sims, The Bible in Milton's Epics (Gainesville, 1962). The section on the Garden of Eden is on pages 112-118.
 41. See two articles by Arnold Williams: "Commentaries on Genesis as

- a Basis for Hexaemeral Material in the Literature of the Late Renaissance", Studies in Philology, XXXIV (1937), pp.191-208; and "Milton and the Renaissance Commentaries on Genesis", Modern Philology, XXVII (1940), pp.263-278. See also Sister M.I. Corcoran's study, Milton's Paradise with Reference to the Hexaemeral Background (Chicago, 1945).
42. See Evert Nordcaai Clark's discussion of the use made by Milton of the Abyssinian materials in the works of contemporary geographers and map-makers, notably Samuel Purchas and Peter Heylyn, in "Milton's Abyssinian Paradise", The University of Texas Studies in English, XXIX (1950), pp.129-150; and J.B. Broadbent's exploration of the thesis that "Paradise itself was to the Elizabethans both a literary tradition and a geographical hypothesis. . . descriptions which now seem artificial and stereotyped were written and read with one eye on the object as it had been seen by the voyagers". ("Milton's Paradise", Modern Philology, LI, No. 3 (1954), pp.160-176).
 43. Both Arnold Stein, in his chapter on "The Garden" in Answerable Style (Seattle and London, 1953 and 1967) and Louis L. Martz in The Paradise Within explore some of the associations of Milton's paradise with the vision of pastoral. For a discussion of the topos of the Eternal Spring in the age of Milton see above, Chapter IV, Section 3. For a thorough account of Milton's literary predecessors and of his own version of the Garden see A. Bartlett Giamatti, The Earthly Paradise and the Renaissance Epic (Princeton, 1966).
 44. Stein, op. cit., p.53.
 45. Eliot wrote:- "Just as a higher degree of characterization of Adam and Eve would have been unsuitable, so a more vivid picture of the earthly Paradise would have been less paradisiacal. For a greater definiteness, a more detailed account of flora and fauna, could only have assimilated Eden to the landscapes of earth with which we are familiar". ("Milton II", On Poetry and Poets (London, 1961), p.157.
 46. J.B. Broadbent, from the article cited n. 42 above, p.176.
 47. See above, Chapter IV, Sections 2 and 3.
 48. C.S. Lewis, op. cit., p.50.
 49. See Broadbent's article; and Chapter VI of his book, Some Graver Subject, where he examines the "hesperianising" of such poets as Lyly and Greene, Marlowe, Jonson, and Drayton.
 50. As Arnold Stein puts it:- "Milton's pastoral deliberately works with exaggeration, expecting the reader to recognize what is traditional in the terms of the discourse". (op. cit., p.68)
 51. For an account of gardens in the seventeenth century see above, Chapter II, Section 13. Milton's Paradise looks forward to the more natural landscape gardens of the eighteenth century, but B. Sprague Allen points out that his poem, although cited as an authority by enthusiasts for the natural garden, had no real influence on its development. "The truth is that long before Milton had begun the composition of his epic, painters, both

Italian and Flemish, had represented Paradise as a glorious natural landscape." (Tides in English Taste (1619-1800), (2 vols.) (New York, 1958), II, 117-119.

52. Stein, op. cit., p.69.
53. G. Wilson Knight, The Burning Oracle (London, 1939), p.83.
54. Compare Marvell's 'Bermudas', discussed above, Chapter XII, Section 5, and Benlowes's "The mount's our table, grass our carpet" etc., quoted and discussed in Chapter XI, Section 4.
55. Broadbent's article, cited above, p.173.
56. Helen Gardner, op. cit., p.71. Joseph Summers points out that Milton reverses Ovid's characteristic motif:- "Milton's "metamorphoses" concern movements from non-life to life, from the static to the mobile, from lower to higher forms". (The Muse's Method, p. 139) And he mentions Sylvester's version of Du Bartas as an example of how Milton "could turn pedestrian detail into poetry". (ibid., p.143)
57. Helen Gardner analyses the way in which the account of the making of the fish "is organized to give rational delight as a series of contrasts". (op. cit., p.74)
58. Watkins, op. cit., p.131.
59. George Coffin Taylor finds Milton's greatest debt to Du Bartas in Book VII, and points out that both poets look to "the objective world in all its multitudinous detail as the chief exciting stimulus to wonder and admiration". (Milton's Use of Du Bartas (Cambridge, Mass., 1934), p.81.)
60. For the various strands which make up the Genesis tradition see Harris Francis Fletcher, Milton's Rabbinical Readings (Urbana, 1930), pp.140-208; Arnold Williams, articles cited n. 41 above; and James H. Sims, op. cit., no. 40 above.
61. See above, Chapter IV, Sections 4 and 5, and Appendix C below.
62. Compare Marvell's "nursery of all things green", Upon Appleton House, l. 339, and Paradise Lost, Book XI, ll. 273-9, quoted above in Section 2 of this chapter.
63. Compare Marvell's treatment of the pathetic fallacy as a figment of Damon's imagination in the Mower Poems, discussed above, Chapter XII, Section 6.
64. A.Z. Butler, "The Pathetic Fallacy in Paradise Lost", in Essays in Honor of W.C. Curry (Nashville, 1954), pp.276-7.

Chapter XIV

Abraham Cowley

Cowley's first volume of verse, entitled Poetical Blossoms, was published in 1633 when he was fifteen. The Mistress appeared in 1647. In 1656, Cowley issued a collection of his poetical works which, besides 'The Mistress' and some miscellaneous pieces, also contained his Pindarique Odes and the Davideis . The volume of Verses written on several occasions (1663) contained a few of the verse translations which were later incorporated in the section 'Several Discourses by way of Essays in Verse and Prose' in The Works of Mr. Abraham Cowley, the posthumous volume printed in 1668, the year after his death. His career thus spans the period covered by this study, and as the most celebrated poet of his day¹ and the one singled out by many later critics as the most representative "transitional" figure of the mid-century, bridging the gulf between the Metaphysical and the Augustan ages,² he provides a convenient subject for the last of these more detailed treatments of individual poets.

From remarks that Cowley lets slip at various times in his long poetic career, one might expect to find in his poems an abundance of lively and detailed representations of the natural world. In one of his last poems,³ 'To the Royal Society', he puts quite clearly his thoughts on the place of the real world of things in art. Bacon is his master - Bacon, the great seminal thinker who:-

From Words, which are but Pictures of the Thought,
 (Though we our Thoughts from them perversly drew)
 To things, the Minds right Object, he it brought,
 Like foolish Birds to painted Grapes we flew.⁴

The artist must keep his eye on the object - fidelity of detail must be his aim, and this can only come from close observation:-

Who to the life an exact Piece would make,
Must not from others Work a Copy take;
No, not from Rubens or Vandike;
Much less content himself to make it like
Th' Ideaes and the Images which lie
In his own Fancy, or his Memory.
No, he before his sight must place
The Natural and Living Face;
The real object must command
Each Judgment of his Eye, and Motion of his Hand.
(Vol. I, p.450)

In an earlier ode, 'The Praise of Pindar', he had implied that the objects which occupied his poetic interest were the objects of nature. Pindar sang of gods, kings, and conquerors, and was borne aloft "with extended Wings":-

Whilst, alas, my tim'orous Muse
Unambitious tracks pursues,
Does with weak unballast wings,
About the mossy Brooks and Springs;
About the Trees new-blossom'ed Heads,
About the Gardens painted Beds,
About the Fields and flowry Meads,
And all inferior beauteous things
Like the laborious Bee,
For little drops of Honey flee,
And there with Humble Sweets contents her Industrie.
(Vol. I, p.179)

Apart from the Latin poem, the Plantarum, and the late Essays, however, nature has no prominent place in his work, except in relation to the new Baconian natural science. Natural imagery, whether in description, metaphor, or simile, does not play an important part in the impact of his poetry, and even when it does occur it is almost always conventional or an abstraction from concrete reality. Nevertheless, Cowley is a significant figure in the history of the use of

natural material in poetry. He was closer than any other eminent poet of his time to the centre of new scientific thinking in the Royal Society, which advocated precise observation of natural phenomena; and he was an able and sensitive spokesman for the movement of those who retreated from the noise and corruption of Restoration London to the quiet and innocence of the country, basing his position philosophically on such classical poets as Virgil and Horace, but psychologically responding to the pressure of new social and political conditions.⁵

1. Figurative Conceits.

In the poems of Cowley's more "metaphysical" style, natural details occur most frequently as metaphor or simile ^mplifying some emotional state or intellectual concern. They are usually already part of the established currency of poetry, and all that is left to the poet's ingenuity is the phrasing and the contrivance of a situation in which they can be used. A typical example is the image in stanza IV of the ode 'On the death of Mrs. Katherine Philips':-

But Wit's like a Luxurian[t] Vine;
 Unless to Virtue's prop it joyn,
 Firm and Erect towards Heaven bound;
 Though it with beauteous Leaves and pleasant Fruit be crown'd,
 It lies deform'd, and rotting on the Ground.
 (Vol. I, p.443)

The image here is the thoroughly familiar one of the vine needing to be supported by a steadier prop,⁶ and so Cowley can concentrate on the moral side of his comparison, substituting Virtue for the customary elm, and drawing out the moral connotations of the descriptive words, "Luxuriant",⁷ "Firm", "Erect", and "rotting". The consis-

tent double reference to the physical and the abstract is similar to Marvell's procedure in 'On a Drop of Dew' and 'The Coronet',⁸ but with one crucial difference. Marvell ensures that the physical status of his dew-drop and flowers and serpent is vividly maintained, while Cowley makes no attempt to create an image of a real vine and prop. Cowley is not, in effect, invoking a detail from nature at all; he is referring to a detail from literary tradition. His ingenuity, the element of poetic surprise, lies in his unexpected application of the old image to the new situation of Wit.

Another traditional image is used in stanza IV of 'Loves Ingratitude':-

What cursed weed's this Love! but one grain sow,
 And the whole field 'twill overgrow;
 Strait will it choak up and devour
 Each wholesome herb and beauteous flour!
 Nay unless something soon I do,
 'Twill kill I fear my very Lawrel too.
 (Vol. I, p. 112)

This is the image put succinctly by Shakespeare in Hamlet's soliloquy:-

Fie on't! ah fie! 'tis an unweeded garden,
 That grows to seed; things rank and gross in nature
 Possess it merely;

and exploited by Marvell in 'Damon the Mower':-

How happy might I still have mow'd,
 Had not Love here his Thistles sow'd!

But Cowley's handling of the conceit is quite different. Whereas Shakespeare's lines convey great emotional intensity, and Marvell creates a dramatic context in which the thistles become part of a realized landscape,⁹ Cowley pursues the details of the image through

several leisurely lines, conscious all the time of the literary quality of his weeds and herbs and flowers. The emphasis on the literary, rather than the natural, is clinched in the last turn of the conceit with the wry allusion to the poet's laurel.¹⁰

The "wholesome herb" suggests another of Cowley's natural images, in 'Beauty', stanza III:-

Beauty, Thou active, passive Ill!
Which dy'st thy self as fast as thou dost kill!
Thou Tulip, who thy stock in paint dost waste,
Neither for Physick good, nor Smell, nor Tast.
Beauty, whose Flames but Meteors are,
Short-liv'd and low, though thou wouldst seem a Star.
(Vol. I, pp.116-7)

Several physical characteristics of the flower are invoked - it is gaily coloured, it is useless as a medicinal herb, it has no scent or taste. But these facts are incidental, not descriptive. We are concerned not with what the tulip is, but with what it is good for. Behind all the shortcomings enumerated is the contempt for the flower and for beauty, splendidly expressed in the disdainful sneer "Thou Tulip", which depends for its impact on the contemporary tulip-mania.¹¹

The last two lines quoted above introduce another much-used image, which is treated more extensively in 'Reason: The use of it in Divine Matters', stanza II:-

Visions and Inspirations some expect
Their course here to direct,
Like senseless Chymists their own wealth destroy,
Imaginary Gold t'enjoy.
So Stars appear to drop to us from skie,
And gild the passage as they fly:
But when they fall, and meet th'opposing ground,
What but a sordid Slime is found?
(Vol. I, p.46)

In both these poems, Cowley appeals chiefly to the current scientific beliefs about the physical properties of meteors, and to their poetic use as images of deception.¹² In the first passage there is no attempt at all to exploit the visual aspects of the image, as Vaughan does in 'To Amoret'; and in the second, the only word which might suggest the sight of a falling star - "gild" - is coupled with the weak "passage", and its visual possibilities are diminished by its primary function of absorbing the star imagery into that of alchemy which precedes it. Vaughan seems to have been a man who was sensuously alert to the things around him; Cowley a man who, although he had intellectual convictions about the importance of observation, was not imaginatively excited by the evidence of his senses. Vaughan's poems are often built around natural details; Cowley builds his poems out of ideas, and brings in a natural image where it can be intellectualised into a conceit.

Stanza III of 'The request' brings out this characteristic of Cowley's verse most clearly:-

If she be coy and scorn my noble fire,
 If her chill heart I cannot move,
 why I'll enjoy the very Love,
 And make a Mistress of my own Desire.
 Flames their most vigorous heat do hold,
 And purest light, if compast round with cold:
 So when sharp Winter means most harm,
 The springing Plants are by the Snow it self kept warm.
 (Vol. I, p.66)

The method of poetic procedure here is one of the commonest in Cowley's work - what George Williamson has described as developing "his thought by quick strokes which are discontinuous".¹³ He begins,

in the first four lines, by saying what he has to say; then he adduces an illustration from his store of scientific knowledge about light and fire; then he adds a further illustration of the same point, this time from the natural world. One ruling idea runs through the three parts of the stanza: the paradox that cold intensifies heat. But the unity of the poetic statement is illusory, it belongs only to the surface. There is no feeling of an inevitable coming together of the items that contribute to the whole stanza, as there is so often in Donne's poetry. There is merely what E.C. Pettet calls "the lucubration of wit".¹⁴ It is the unity of logic rather than the unity of imagination. A. Alvarez has commented perceptively on this weakness in Cowley's poetry. He is speaking of stanza VIII of the 'Ode: of Wit', but what he says applies equally to the passage under discussion, and to much of Cowley's work:-

What Cowley has to say has no organic relationship with the illustrations he uses. He even keeps them apart: he says his say first in polite, simple language; then he gives his examples. . . . The similes, of course, are efficient, lucid and, relatively, learned. But they are not conceits. . . . Since there is always a gap between what he says and the illustrations he uses, each poem becomes, as it were, two-sided; the sides support, illustrate and, above all, simplify each other.¹⁵

Exactly the same process is discernable in the passages quoted above from 'Beauty' and 'Reason'. In the first the deceptiveness and uselessness of beauty is likened first to the tulip and then to meteors; in the second those who rely on "Visions and Inspirations" are compared to alchemists and then to falling stars. The discreteness of the illustrations is reinforced by the verse-form, since in

all three poems they are confined within their own rhyming couplet.

A rather more complex instance of Cowley's exploitation of conventional imagery occurs in the following exemplum from 'The Discovery':-

The Lightning which tall Oaks oppose in vain,
 To strike sometime does not disdain
 The humble Furzes of the Plain.
 She being so high, and I so low,
 Her power by this does greater show,
 Who at such distance gives so sure a blow.
 (Vol. I, p.98)

The significance of the tallness of the oaks becomes clear when the adjective attached to the furze is found to be "humble". Height only matters in its emblematic extension as pride and greatness of rank or quality. Cowley is here cleverly combining in unexpected ways three traditional images. The image of lightning striking an oak is a common one;¹⁶ the comparison of a lofty tree with a bramble or other lowly plant is frequently used as an emblem of pride and humility;¹⁷ and the equation of lightning with the glance of a beautiful woman is a much overworked image in sixteenth and seventeenth-century love poetry. Cowley brings these three conventional items together and creates a kind of permutation of references: the oaks belong to the first and second images; the lightning belongs to the first and third; and the idea of the distance between high and low belongs to the second, but takes in the first as well. Once again, Cowley's witty allusion is not to the details themselves but to their customary usage in previous poetry.

2. Nature: Artificial and Intellectual.

Cowley wrote a handful of poems which take a natural object or phenomenon as their subject. A brief look at them shows how little he put his theory of letting the "real object" command his artistic activity into practice. The two Anacreontics entitled 'The Grasshopper' and 'The Swallow' (Vol. I, pp.57-58) betray no trace of first-hand observation. The grasshopper is presented as a perfect example of the "Epicuraean Animal", who lives with mirth and plenty through the summer months. Richard Lovelace's poem on this insect sees it in a similar way in its first part, but begins with a concrete touch which makes the reader feel that a real creature is being discussed:-

O thou that swing'st upon the waving hair
Of some well-filled eaten beard.

The swallow is treated in terms of the Tereus and Philomel myth, the erroneous belief that swallows hibernated, and the common saying that this bird brings the spring,¹⁸ and is finally cursed for waking the poet from a pleasant dream with its "tuneless Serenade".

There are a few instances of descriptions of scenes in Cowley's verse, representing several different kinds of artificial landscape. 'The Second Olympique Ode of Pindar', stanza VIII, provides an example of the earthly paradise, "The Muse-discovered World of Islands Fortunate":-

Soft-footed Winds with tuneful voyces there
Dance through the perfum'd Air.
There Silver Rivers through Enamell'd Meadows glide,
And golden Trees enrich their side.
Th'illustrious Leaves no dropping Autumn fear,
And jewels for their fruit they bear.
(Vol. I, p.161)

Cowley frankly admits that, in contrast to Milton's paradise, this is

purely a flight of exotic fancy - this realm of silver rivers and golden trees is "Muse-discovered" - and he revels in the display of conventional images of richness.

In the second of the Sylva odes it is the Golden Age of pastoral that furnishes the materials for a landscape of the imagination:-

Give me a River which doth scorne to shew
 An added beauty, whose cleere brow
 May be my looking-glasse, to see
 What my face is, and what my mind should be.

Here waves call waves, and glide along in ranke,
 And prattle to the smiling banke.
 Here sad King fishers tell their tales,
 And fish enrich the Brooke with silver scales.

Dasyes the first borne of the teeming Spring,
 On each side their embroidery bring,
 Here Lillies wash, and grow more white,
 And Daffadills to see themselves delight.

Here a fresh Arbor gives her amorous shade,
 Which Nature, the best Gard'ner made.
 Here I would set, and sing rude layes,
 Such as the Nymphs and me my selfe should please.
 (Vol. II, p.61)

The mirror-like stream, the silver fish, the embroidery of flowers, and the animation of lilies and daffodils - all are culled from numerous pictures of the idyllic life of the poet-swain. Equally artificial is the allegorical setting for Cowley's wail of distress in 'The Complaint':-

In a deep Vision's intellectual scene,
 Beneath a Bow'r for sorrow made,
 Th'uncomfortable shade,
 Of the black Yew's unlucky green,
 Mixt with the mourning Willow's careful gray,
 Where Reverend Cham cuts out his Famous way,
 The Melancholy Cowley lay.
 (Vol. I, pp.435-6)

Here he relies not on hyperbole or pastoral fancies, but on stock emblematic items - the yew that grew in churchyards and signified death, and the willow that was the tree of forsaken lovers. As in the other "descriptions", he insists from the start on its imaginary nature: it is merely an "intellectual scene".

The lines 'On the Death of Mr. William Hervey' make use of the popular device of calling upon nature to respond to human moods:-

Ye fields of Cambridge, our dear Cambridge, say,
Have ye not seen us walking every day?
Was there a Tree about which did not know
The Love betwixt us two?
Henceforth, ye gentle Trees, for ever fade;
Or your sad branches thicker joyn,
And into darksome shades combine,
Dark as the Grave wherein my Friend is laid.
(Vol. I, p.34)

What these and other passages in Cowley have in common is an avoidance of the real natural scene. In spite of his theoretical remarks, he was not one of the poets who were beginning to find in the sights and sounds of the countryside a subject worthy of poetic treatment in itself. When he does turn to description, it is from the pages of books that he derives his conception of landscape. Other poets, most notably Marvell and Milton, approached the task of description with the phrases of the poets echoing in their minds, but they had the imaginative power to invest their own direct experience of nature with the rich associations of literature or to release the psychological truths which were locked in the stale tropes of rhetoric. Cowley's treatment of the literary material seems to remain at the level of verbal skill, rarely informed by the pressure of felt

Cowley and his rational readers are very well aware. Marvell also exposed the fallacies inherent in some of the rhetorical commonplaces of the day, but he did so as part of a serious and penetrating exploration of the way the human mind responds to its environment. Cowley, one feels, is more concerned with the witty capital he can make out of his readers' sophisticated familiarity with literary fashions.

All this is not to say that Cowley was completely unmoved by nature. He did respond to the patterns and forces that could be discerned emerging from the mass of individual details. 'Inconstancy' is one of the few love poems in 'The Mistress' in which natural imagery seems to engage the imagination of the poet. He is excusing himself for not remaining faithful in his love after an interval of five years, and argues that he has changed in accordance with the laws of nature:-

You might as well this Day inconstant name,
 Because the Weather is not still the same,
 That it was yesterday: or blame the Year,
 Cause the Spring, Flowers; and Autumn, Fruit does bear.
 The World's a Scene of Changes, and to be
Constant, in Nature were Inconstancy;
 For 'twere to break the Laws her self has made:
 Our Substances themselves do fleet and fade;
 The most fixt Being still does move and fly,
 Swift as the wings of Time 'tis measur'd by.
 (Vol. I, p.74)

There seems to be more intensity (if such a word can be applied to Cowley) in these lines than in any of the expressions of man's love for woman in 'The Mistress'. The love motif is merely an occasion for a poem on the theme of inconstancy, or to give it its more common name, mutability. This abstract concept seems to move Cowley more

strongly than any individual natural detail or scene, or any particular human passion or experience.

One of his finest poems grows from the same type of material. 'Hymn. To Light' (Vol. I, pp.444-7) has an imaginative force and a vital intellectual involvement in its subject that is unique in Cowley's work. As in 'Inconstancy', it is the idea of continual movement and change that appeals to the poet, as he thinks about this "First born of Chaos":-

Thou Tide of Glory which no Rest dost know,
But ever Ebb, and ever Flow!

He celebrates light, too, as the source of life, and the origin of all that is worthwhile in the Creation:-

Hail active Natures watchful Life and Health!
Her Joy, her Ornament, and Wealth!
Hail to thy Husband Heat, and Thee!
Thou the worlds beauteous Bride, the lusty Bridg^eroom He!

The finest stanzas in the poem are those in which Cowley looks at a series of natural details in terms of his ruling pre-occupation with light as an all-powerful agent:-

All the Worlds bravery that delights our Eyes
Is but thy sev'ral Liveries,
Thou the Rich Dy on them bestowest,
Thy nimble Pencil Paints this Landskape as thou go'st.

A Crimson Garment in the Rose thou wear'st;
A Crown of studded Gold thou bear'st,
The Virgin Lillies in their White,
Are clad but with the Lawn of almost Naked Light.

The Violet, springs little Infant, stands,
Girt in thy purple Swadling-bands:
On the fair Tulip thou dost dote;
Thou cloath'st it in a gay and party-colour'd Coat.

With Flame condensst thou dost the Jewels fix,
 And solid Colours in it mix:
Flora her self envyes to see
 Flowers fairer then her own, and durable as she.

The details selected - the rose, the lily, the tulip, jewels - are the standard properties of seventeenth-century verse, and Cowley does not observe their individual characteristics. But he does see them as he never seems to have seen any other natural details in his poetry. He sees them vividly and intensely, transfigured by his intellectual passion for light. Each is bathed in the "Tide of Glory" that he sees sweeping round the world and suffusing it in brilliance. He evinces a kind of abstract, intellectual delight in the objects of the senses. But his intellectual excitement is informed also by metaphysical insight: the "Living Stream" flowing from "the vast Ocean of unbounded Day" is an expression of the essential unity of all life, of the unchanging oneness which transcends the apparent mutability of the universe. Robert B. Hinman ably sums up the various qualities of this most impressive poem:-

"To Light" is a religious poem that praises God through detailed praise of His work. It conveys a profound awareness of the spirit underlying and encompassing phenomenal reality. Cowley deals with light as both physicist and imaginative poet. The poem not only praises light, but is about light.¹⁹

3. The Poet-Philosopher.

The two poems just discussed show where Cowley's real sympathies lay as far as nature is concerned. It is an object of study as a means to truth: by examining the natural world man can arrive at a greater understanding of reality. So Cowley turns to nature not as

a collection of beautiful things which can furnish him with aesthetic pleasure, but as material for intellectual enquiry and religious affirmation.²⁰ Throughout his life he maintained a keen interest in the developments of natural science, and in 1661 printed a pamphlet containing 'A Proposition for the Advancement of Experimental Philosophy', which sets out the need for an organized investigation into the properties of the physical world along Baconian lines:-

And certainly the solitary and unactive Contemplation of Nature, by the most ingenious Persons living, in their own private Studies, can never effect it. Our Reasoning Faculty as well as Fancy, does but Dream, when it is not guided by sensible Objects. We shall compound where Nature has divided, and divide where Nature has compounded, and create nothing but either Deformed Monsters, or at best pretty but impossible Mermaids. 'Tis like Painting by Memory and Imagination which can never produce a Picture to the Life.²¹

The thoughts expressed in these lines found their way into several of Cowley's most successful poems. His interest in science was recognized when he was elected a member of what was to become the Royal Society, in 1660/1. Nethercot notes that there is no evidence that he ever attended any of the meetings, and that his name was not included when a list of Fellows was drawn up for presentation to Charles II at the time of the granting of the second charter in 1663.²² But he was in close contact with Sprat and Evelyn until he died, and was asked to write some verses for Sprat's official history of the Society which was published in 1667.

The Pindaric Odes of the 1656 volume contain poems which witness to his place in the movement towards a new experimental approach to natural philosophy, and Hinman suggests that the new science gave a

fresh impetus to the poet's imagination:-

Instead of convincing Cowley that the poet is a frothy trifler, Bacon and Hobbes showed him that poetry could have more importance and meaning than it had ever had before. They inspired his faith in imagination as the means of holding the worlds of matter and spirit in harmony.²³

Cowley aspired to be the poet-philosopher of his age.²⁴ His ode 'To Mr. Hobs' (Vol. I, pp.188-190) gives a survey of the contemporary situation. Natural philosophy had an auspicious beginning with the great thinkers of antiquity, but later generations failed to carry knowledge forward:-

And in the School-mens hands it perisht quite at last.
Then nought but Words it grew,
And those all Barb'arous too.

Many modern thinkers, aware that something is wrong, vainly seek for enlightenment in the tombs of ancient wisdom:-

We search among the Dead
For Treasures Buried,
Whilst still the Liberal Earth does hold
So many Virgin Mines of undiscover'ed Gold.

Hobbes is one of the new men who have taken up the challenge of modern thought and searched areas of the "Liberal Earth" that have been left unexplored:-

Thy nobler Vessel the vast Ocean tries,
And nothing sees but Seas and Skies,
Till unknown Regions it descries,
Thou great Columbus of the Golden Lands of new Philosophies.

The ode 'Upon Dr. Harvey', from the 1663 volume, traces Harvey's researches through the plant world, and finally into the human body, where he discovered the circulation of the blood. Stanza IV contains the most interesting remarks:-

Thus Harvey sought for Truth in Truth's own Book
 The Creatures, which by God himself was writ;
 And wisely thought 'twas fit,
 Not to read Comments only upon it,
 But on th'original it self to look.
 Methinks in Arts great Circle others stand
 Lock't up together, Hand in Hand,
 Every one leads as he is led,
 The same bare path they tread,
 A Dance like Fairies a Fantastick round,
 But neither change their motion, nor their ground:
 Had Harvey to this Road confin'd his wit,
 His noble Circle of the Blood, had been untrodden yet.
 (Vol. I, pp.417-18)

This is another rejection of the methods of the Schoolmen in favour of the new Baconian approach. What is important for this study is the attitude to the Book of the Creatures. Cowley wants it to be read scientifically: truth is to be found by going straight to the "original", and making first-hand observations of nature. Writers like Ralph Austen and Mildmay Fane read nature's Book for moral and metaphysical lessons about the virtuous life and the nature of God; Cowley lauds Harvey for reading it in order to discover the physical structure of plants and the human body. In order to read the Book of the Creatures in this way the aids that the enquirer needs are not the spectacles of traditional wisdom, but the newest fruits of human ingenuity, the telescope and microscope. In the ode 'To the Royal Society', Cowley exults in what has already been achieved by the new methods:-

New Scenes of Heaven already we espy,
 And Crowds of golden Worlds on high;

 Natures great Workes no distance can obscure,
 No smallness her near Objects can secure
 Y'have taught the curious Sight to press
 Into the privatest recess

Of her imperceptible Littleness.

Y'have learn'd to Read her smallest Hand,
And well begun her deepest Sense to Understand.

(Vol. I, pp,451-2)

Presumably he is thinking especially of Robert Hooke's Micrographia, which had been published two years earlier.²⁵

But although Cowley was an enthusiastic champion of the Royal Society and its methods, this does not mean that the value he put on scientific research was narrowly utilitarian. Like Robert Boyle and Isaac Newton, to name only the two most eminent among many, he saw the investigations into the physical structure of the universe as part of a much greater quest.²⁶ As Hinman puts it:-

The heirs of Bacon and the heralds of the new science were confident that they could ultimately trace out and unify all the secrets of nature open to man and reveal them as parts of a cosmic harmony. In the endless scale of nature Cowley saw tangible evidence of God's grand design, of His direct and continuous concern with His creation.²⁷

In this, despite his more modern approach, he was at one with the avid readers in Nature's book whose work forms so large a part of the poetic output of the mid-seventeenth century.²⁸

4. Of Plants.

The section of "the endless scale of nature" which Cowley knew most intimately was the world of plants. He was fascinated by both the horticultural and the medicinal aspects of herbs and flowers. After his return from exile with the king in 1654,²⁹ he spent some time in the detailed study of herbs. Sprat records that he needed some politically acceptable occupation to cloak his secret service activities:-

And that of Physic was thought most proper. To this purpose, after many Anatomical Dissections, he proceeded to the consideration of Simples; and having furnish'd himself with Books of that Nature, he retir'd into a fruitful part of Kent, where every Field and Wood might shew him the real Figures of those Plants of which he read. Thus he speedily Master'd that part of the Art of Medicine.³⁰

As a result of these studies, Cowley produced, in 1662, a Latin poem in two books called A. Couellii Plantarum Libri Duo. In the few years that remained before his death he added four more books. The first two books are devoted to herbs; the next two to flowers; and the last two to trees. Nethercot says of the 1662 volume that the poet treats his subject "from the medical rather than the botanical point of view";³¹ but, although Cowley's chief aim was to convey in verse the medicinal properties of various herbs, this remark gives a misleading impression. The Plantarum, especially in the first two books, reveals a wide knowledge not only of the physical structure of numerous plants, which must have been the fruit of letting the "real object" command his description, but also of the kind of situation in which they are most likely to be found. In his Kentish retreat he must have searched every "Field and Wood" diligently, and noted what he saw, according to the best Baconian prescription.

A few examples will demonstrate the minuteness with which he presents the physical characteristics of the herbs. Here is the Eye-Bright:-

On a black Stalk, nine Inches long she grew,
With Leaves all notch'd, and of a greenish Hue.
While pretty Flowers on her Top she bore,
With yellow mixt, and purple Streaks all o're.³²

And a few pages later, the Sun-dew or Lustwort is introduced:-

To say the Truth, Nature's too kind to Thee,
 For all thy Days thou spend'st in Luxury.
 Thy Flowers are Silver, and a purple Down
 Covers thy Body, like a Silken Gown:
 Whilst, to increase thy Pomp and Pride, each Vein
 Of thine a Golden Humour does contain.
 Each Leaf is hollow made, just like a Cup,
 Which Liquor always to the brim fills up.³³

Admittedly not all the herbs are presented in such detail, and this kind of description forms a very small part of the total book. Some plants are embellished with mythological stories - like the Mint, who tells how she was ravished by Pluto and metamorphosed into a herb by Proserpine³⁴ - or are characterized only by their medical uses. But there are enough passages like the ones quoted to show what Cowley could achieve by way of exact visual description when the nature of the literary kind he was employing justified it.

The Plantarum is an expression of Cowley's deepest concerns not only in its obvious leanings towards Baconian empiricism. In his preface to the first two books, he anticipates the charge that he has abandoned the supreme poetic task of religious epic - the unfinished Davideis - for a much humbler and more profane one. His reply is the expected one, that any work which examines the creation must be to the glory of the Creator:-

But I esteem that which celebrates the wonderful Works of Providence, not to be far distant from a Sacred Poem. Nothing can be found more admirable in Nature than the Virtues of several Plants, therefore, amongst other things, of a most noble strain, the Divine Poet upon that Account praises the Deity, Who brings forth Grass upon the Mountains, and Herbs for the use of Man, Psalm cxlj. ver. 8.³⁵

Hinman suggests that in the many aspects of plants which the book explores - "the diversity, the beauty, the wonder, the virtuous qualities, the pervasive life" - Cowley found, as he found in the miracle of light, convincing evidence "of a universal order in which man can share".³⁶

5. The Sabine Field.

The last important aspect of Cowley's treatment of nature is his retirement into the country towards the end of his life. He left London for Barn Elms, to what Nethercot describes as "a quiet old estate across the Thames in Surrey",³⁷ in 1663. But this was only the accomplishment of a desire which he claimed to have harboured for many years. Indeed, in one of his last works, the essay 'Of My Self', he quotes from an ode composed when he was thirteen years old, remarking: "I was then of the same mind as I am now" (Vol. II, p.456). The second of the three verses is as follows:-

Books should, not business entertain the Light,
And sleep, as undisturb'd as Death, the Night.
My House a Cottage, more
Then Palace, and should fitting be
For all my Use, no Luxury.
My Garden painted o're
With Natures hand, not Arts; and pleasures yeild,
Horace might envy in his Sabine field.
(Vol. II, p.457)

Dr. Johnson notes that in the preface to the 1656 volume of his poems he expressed a wish to leave the troubles of the world behind him:-

In this preface he declares that "his desire had been for some years past, and did still vehemently continue, to retire himself to some of the American plantations, and to forsake this

world for ever".³⁸

There are a number of hints in the poems of this volume that the idea of retirement was occupying his thoughts at this time. His elegy 'On the Death of Mr. William Hervey' contains the couplet:-

But happy Thou, ta'ne from this frantick age,
Where Ignorance and Hypocrisie does rage!
(Vol. I, p.37)

The phrase "frantick age" was to come back to him when he was composing his Essays at the end of his life, and justifying his action in retiring from public affairs.

The lines 'In imitation of Martial's Epigram' begin:-

If, dearest Friend, it my good Fate might be
T'enjoy at once a quiet Life and Thee.

He would gladly exchange "Great Mens favour" and "the Courts thin Diet" for:-

. . . Books, and wise Discourse, Gardens and Fields,
And all the joys that unmixt Nature yields.
Thick Summer shades where Winter still does ly,
Bright Winter Fires that Summers part supply.
(Vol. I, pp.38-9)

But most important of these 1656 poems is 'The Wish', which looks forward to his actual retirement seven years later, and coins a remark which he was to echo in his famous letter to Evelyn, 'The Garden'. 'The Wish' begins:-

Well then; I now do plainly see,
This busie world and I shall ne're agree;
Ah, yet, e're I descend to th' Grave
May I a small House, and large Garden have!
And a few Friends, and many Books, both true,
Both wise, and both delightful too!
And since Love ne're will from me flee,

A Mistress moderately fair,
 And good as Guardian-Angels are,
 Only belov'd, and loving me!

Oh, Fountains, when in you shall I
 My self, eas'd of unpeaceful thoughts, espy?
 Oh Fields! Oh Woods! when, when shall I be made
 The happy Tenant of your shade?
 (Vol. I, pp.87-8)

Cowley seems to be much more emotionally involved in the ideas expressed here than he ever is in the more exclusively love poems of 'The Mistress'. The mistress is merely a pleasant, but not essential, adjunct to his dream of rural felicity.

Such were the hints earlier in his life that foreshadowed his eventual retirement at the not old age of 45. The details of his retired life are soon given. At Barn Elms he devoted much of his time to cultivating his garden, with advice from his friend John Evelyn. Finding the atmosphere too damp there, and having suffered one serious bout of fever, he moved in 1665 to Chertsey, twenty miles further up the river. Opinions differ as to his life in these last years. Johnson, who detested the country himself, was sceptical about the whole enterprise:-

He seems, however, to have lost part of his dread of the hum of men. He thought himself now safe enough from intrusion, without the defence of mountains and oceans; and instead of seeking shelter in America, wisely went only so far from the bustle of life as that he might easily find his way back, when solitude should grow tedious.³⁹

Thomas Sprat, who after all was one of his closest friends, informs us that he gave himself over to the study of nature:-

This labour about Natural Science was the perpetual and uninterrupted task of that obscure part of his life.⁴⁰

Nethercot considers that:-

From an amateur gardener at Barn Elms, Abraham Cowley became, in a modest way, a country gentleman at Chertsey.⁴¹

He believes that Cowley's last years were spent largely in literary activity - in completing the Plantarum with books V and VI, and in composing the Essays in Verse and Prose.

Whatever Cowley's chief occupations were in his retreat, there is no doubt that he was kept well informed of developments in the field of natural philosophy, and in his last few months wrote the poem for Sprat's History of the Royal Society in which his dearest beliefs were re-iterated. He died on July 28th 1667, as a result of a chill taken in the fields of his estate. These are the facts of his retirement. It remains to examine the reasons which led Cowley to retire from close contact with public life, and to assess their importance in the context of the contemporary trends in English poetry.

The most obvious and material reason for Cowley's retreat from London to the country was the frustration of his hopes of advancement under the restored monarch, whom he had served faithfully for many years, but who could not forgive the poet's indiscretion in one of his prefaces.⁴² Cowley denies this in his essay 'Of My Self', claiming that he had never looked for "any other advantage from His Majesties Happy Restoration, but the getting into some moderately convenient Retreat in the Country" (Vol. II, p.458). Indeed, the main purpose of the Essays seems to be to justify his action, and to assert the positive values of a country life. One of the impulses behind his

decision was literary - Cowley was steeped in the classics, particularly in the works of Virgil and Horace, and had an ideal conception of the retired life from their writings. The poem from his boyhood quoted earlier looks forward to pleasures which "Horace might envy in his Sabine field". Geoffrey Walton places Cowley's attitudes in relation to those of other men of his century:-

Compared with that of, say, George Herbert, Cowley's conception of country life is decidedly literary. . . . Nor does he ever show a taste for anything like Izaak Walton's unsophisticated pastoralism. English rural civilization is the important thing for Herbert and Walton; Cowley's retreat is always implicitly compared to the Sabine Farm; he wishes to be the 'Innocent Deceiver of the World, as Horace calls him'.⁴³

Besides the implicit appeal to the authority of the ancients, evident in the numerous translations of Beatus ille poems by Virgil, Horace, Martial, and Claudian,⁴⁴ Cowley is careful to base his action plainly on classical precedent. In the essay 'Of Solitude' (which also owes something to Montaigne) he relates the story of Scipio, and comments: "What an Authority is here for the credit of Retreat?" (Vol.II, p.392).

Even though he claims to have enjoyed the countryside in his childhood (see 'Of My Self'), he seems to have entertained a city-dweller's ideals and illusions about country life, bred of ignorance and pastoral literature. He offers the following picture of idyllic pastoral existence, in the translation from the Georgics appended to 'Of Agriculture':-

Through artless Grotts the murmuring waters glide;
Thick Trees both against Heat and Cold provide,
From whence the Birds salute him; and his ground
With lowing Herds, and bleating Sheep does sound;
And all the Rivers, and the Forests nigh,

Both Food and Game, and Exercise supply.
(Vol. II, p.409)

But Cowley was not idealist enough to attempt a life of pastoral poverty such as some of the poets praised. His practical dream is given in the essay 'Of Liberty':-

If you ask me in what condition of Life I think the most allow'd; I should pitch upon that sort of People whom King James was wont to call the Happiest of our Nation, the Men placed in the Countrey by their Fortune above an High-Constable, and yet beneath the trouble of a Justice of the Peace, in a moderate plenty, without any just argument for the desire of encreasing it by the care of many relations, and with so much knowledge and love of Piety and Philosophy (that is of the study of Gods Laws, and of his Creatures) as may afford him matter enough never to be Idle though without Business; and never to be Melancholy though without Sin or Vanity.
(Vol. II, p.386)

He casts an amused glance at the pastoral ideal in 'The Dangers of an Honest man in much Company'. When he first went to dwell in the country, he says, he thought to "have met there with the simplicity of the old Poetical Golden Age", and to have had for companions shepherds like those in Sidney's Arcadia. But he soon realized that he was still "in Old England", and that if he "could not content himself" with any thing less than exact Fidelity in human conversation", he might just as well "go back and seek for it in the Court, or the Exchange, or Westminster-Hall". (Vol. II, pp.446-7). But this prose common sense and realism, like the theoretical belief in the value of close observation of nature, does not carry over into the poetry. In verse he always subscribes to the classical ideal. And even in his prose attitudes, the influence of literature is not to be discounted entirely.

In fact, the attitudes of Horace were reinforced by the conditions

of Cowley's own day. A very strong element in the desire for country life is the contrast with the City and the Court, rather than the intrinsic merits of the country itself. This aspect of his retirement is summed up in the poem on 'The Garden', which is close to Marvell's in some of its sentiments:-

Oh blessed shades! O gentle cool retreat
From all th' immoderate Heat,
In which the frantick World does Burn and Sweat!
(Vol. II, p.423)

The political extension of the pastoral imagery of heat and shade should not be forgotten in reading lines such as these.⁴⁵ H. Wendell Smith sees the "back to nature" movement, of which Cowley is the chief spokesman, against a background of rising materialism and trade, civil and political deracination, and urban development, and suggests that the poet's retreat to Chertsey "is in substance one towards the agrarian world which represents the old monarchy as against the new urban society".⁴⁶ He finds the phrasing of the opening lines of the poem to Solitude significant:-

Hail, old Patrician Trees, so great and good!
Hail ye Plebeian under wood!
Where the Poetique Birds rejoyce.
(Vol. II, p.395)

Cowley, he argues, is clearly "finding in Nature the quality which he can no longer find in society".⁴⁷ In men like Vaughan and Traherne, the quest for innocence, for a better state of existence than the unrest of the present, took the form of a virtual deification of childhood; others, like Marvell and Milton, looked back to the time before the Fall, and explored the implications of the literary genres

associated with the myth of a Golden Age; Cowley found, in the Horatian ideal of the Sabine Farm, an image of the more recent lost paradise of an England in which social, political, and economic hierarchies had been maintained as the firm foundation of civilized life.

There are in the Essays very occasional hints that Cowley did find some positive pleasure in the things of nature. In 'Of Agriculture' he remarks, "We are here among the vast and noble Scenes of Nature" (Vol. II, p.403); and in 'Of Greatness' he declares, "If indeed we look only upon the flourishing Head of the Tree, it appears a most beautiful object" (Vol. II, p.432). Stanzas IV and V of the poem on Solitude express aesthetic delight in natural details, but they follow very closely the conventions of this kind of verse:-

Here let me careless and unthoughtful lying,
Hear the soft winds above me flying,
With all their wanton Boughs dispute,
And the more tuneful Birds to both replying
Nor be my self too Mute.

A Silver stream shall roul his waters neer,
Guilt with the Sun-beams here and there
On whose enamel'd Bank I'll walk,
And see how prettily they Smile, and hear
How prettily they Talk.

(Vol. II, p.395)

The experience here has affinities with that described by Marvell in stanzas lxxv-vi of Upon Appleton House, in which the poet lies beneath the trees, "languishing with ease" while the wind winnows the chaff of thoughts from his head. But whereas Marvell creates a strong sensuous impression of his closeness to nature, and hints at a quasi-mystical communion with his surroundings, Cowley's picture of rural happiness

remains literary and deliberate. As Nethercot says, à propos of another poem, "Nature to Cowley was a pretty thing - not a profoundly inspiring or even a stirring thing".⁴⁸

But in turning to nature, Cowley had more than literary, political, and aesthetic considerations in mind: he never forgot his Baconian allegiance. In 'The Garden', he explains to Evelyn the reasons for his desire to own a garden:-

I never had any other desire so strong, and so like to Covetousness as that one which I have had always, that I might be master at last of a small house and large garden, with very moderate conveniences joyned to them, and there dedicate the remainder of my life only to the culture of them and study of nature.
(Vol. II, p.420)

Sprat was quite certain that the scientific opportunities offered by a country life were what mattered most to his friend:-

And indeed he enter'd with great advantage on the studies of Nature, even as the first great Men of Antiquity did, who were generally both Poets and Philosophers. He betook himself to its Contemplation, as well furnish'd with sound Judgment and diligent Observation and good Method to discover its Mysteries, as with Abilities to set it forth in all its Ornaments.⁴⁹

On the evidence of his poetry, however - except in a small number of passages in the Plantarum and in the poem 'To Light' - Cowley was happier working as a propagandist for the new philosophy, writing poems in praise of the methods and achievements of Bacon, Hobbes, Hooke, Harvey, and the Royal Society, rather than making poetry out of his own "study of nature".⁵⁰

6. Conclusion.

Considering the fact that he combined, in his attitude to nature,

the Horatian rural philosophy and the empirical approach of the new scientists, natural details have very little significance in Cowley's poetry. He was much less of a nature poet than many other writers of his period - Vaughan, Milton, Marvell, Daniel, Benlowes, the Duchess of Newcastle, even Mildmay Fane spring to mind. But his "cool dry intelligence"⁵¹ was more in tune with the sensibility of the new age of Newton, which was finding answers to the problems which had perplexed an earlier generation, than the vast mythical imagination of Milton, the mystical apprehensions of Vaughan, and the complex, doubting, chameleon-like sensibility and intellect of Marvell. As the most popular poet of the 1660s, and an important influence on the new generation of writers of the Restoration,⁵² Cowley's work is representative of the Enlightenment and points the way forward to new developments in the poetic attitude towards nature.

NOTES

1. See Arthur H. Nethercot, Abraham Cowley: The Muse's Hannibal (London, 1931), pp.376-7.
2. George Williamson, for example, suggests that in Cowley's work "the long struggle between reason and imagination is coming to a close in the victory of reason and good sense". (The Donne Tradition, (New York, 1930 and 1958), p.188). J.C. Ghosh argues that it is only the style of the earlier poems that is metaphysical: "His mind and spirit are always Augustan, and never really metaphysical". ("Abraham Cowley", Sewanee Review, LXI (1953), p.439). And A. Alvarez considers that: "Cowley's poetry was a turning-point because it seemed to be following Donne's style, whilst in fact being intensely and fashionably of the Restoration". (The School of Donne (London, 1961), p.143).
3. Nethercot says that this is the "last known poem from Cowley's pen" (op. cit., p.269).
4. All quotations from Cowley's English works are from the two volumes edited by A.R. Waller: Abraham Cowley: Poems (Cambridge, 1905) and Abraham Cowley: Essays, Plays and Sundry Verses (Cambridge, 1906). Page references will be given in the text, and they will indicate which of these two volumes they refer to.
5. Maren-Sofie Røstvig takes him as her main exemplar of Horatian attitudes in the first chapter of The Happy Man, 2nd ed. (New York, 1962), Vol. I.
6. For previous examples of this image see above, Chapter V, Section 3b.
7. O.E.D. cites Cowley's poem for the meaning "Growing profusely" (2); it also gives an instance from 1654 of the meaning "Excessively prosperous" (3.b), quoting the phrase "Luxuriant and wanton times". Luxury (examples from 1602 and 1661) still had the meaning "Lasciviousness, lust" (1).
8. For a discussion of these poems see above, Chapter XII, Section 5.
9. See above, Chapter XII, Section 6.
10. George Williamson's general judgment on Cowley is pertinent here: "his conceits rarely succeed, like Donne's, by throwing a new or unusual light on the psychology of feeling. When they do succeed, it is usually by a triumph of ingenuity, of sheer intellectual agility". (op. cit., pp.183-4)
11. Compare Marvell's sneering comment on the craze for tulips in 'The Mower against Gardens'.
12. For comments on the use of this image by other poets see above, Chapter X, Section 1, Chapter XI, Section 3, and Chapter XII, Section 2.
13. Williamson, op. cit., p.187.
14. E.C. Pettet, "A Study of Abraham Cowley", English, IV, No. 21 (1942), p.88.
15. Alvarez, op. cit., p.145.
16. See, for example, Marvell's 'A Poem upon the Death of O.C.', ll. 261-8; Paradise Lost, Book I, ll. 612-15; and Cowley's own

Davideis, Book III:-

"So a strong Oak, which many years had stood
 With fair and flourishing boughs, it self a Wood;
 Though it might long the Axes violence bear,
 And play'd with Winds which other Trees did tear;
 Yet by the Thunders stroke from th'root 'tis rent."
 (Vol. I, p.339)

17. See above, Chapter V, Section 3b.
18. Compare A Winter's Tale, Act IV, sc. iv, ll. 118-119.
 "daffodils,
 That come before the swallow dares".
19. Robert B. Hinman, Abraham Cowley's World of Order (Cambridge, Mass., 1960), p.300.
20. In his preface, Hinman claims that: "the principal appeal of his poetry is philosophical - not versified philosophy, but a philosophical attitude vitalized through metaphor". (op. cit., p.vii)
21. Waller's ed., Vol. II, p.247. This pamphlet had already been overtaken by events when it was published, the Royal Society having come into existence.
22. See Nethercot, op. cit., pp.216-17.
23. Hinman, op. cit., p.92.
24. Hinman writes: "Lucretius faced up to the primary task of the poet-philosopher: he employed his imagination upon all the facts of his world to find pattern and meaning in them. Taken together, Cowley's works reveal a similar attempt." (op. cit., p.32)
25. For a discussion of Hooke's work with the microscope see above, Chapter II, Section 7.
26. See above, Chapter II, Sections 8 and 10.
27. Hinman, op. cit., p.30.
28. For this aspect of the use of natural details in the poetry of the period see above, Chapters V, Section 5; VI, 6; IX, 3; X, 6; XI, 1; XII, 8.
29. For the details of his return to England see Nethercot, op. cit., p.143.
30. Thomas Sprat, "An Account of the Life and Writings of Mr. Abraham Cowley: Written to Mr. M. Clifford, 1668", in Critical Essays of the Seventeenth Century, ed. J.E. Spingarn (Oxford, 1908), Vol. II, p.135.
31. Nethercot, op. cit., p.222.
32. Quotations from the Plantarum are from Nahum Tate's translation, in The Works of Mr. Abraham Cowley, 8th ed. (London, 1708), Vol. III. The account of the Eye-Bright is on p.267.
33. *ibid.*, p.272.
34. *ibid.*, pp.282-3.
35. *ibid.*, p.Q4^v.
36. Hinman, op. cit., p.268.
37. Nethercot, op. cit., p.235.
38. Samuel Johnson, Lives of the English Poets, "Everyman's Library",

- 2 vols. (London, 1925 and 1961), Vol. I, p.5.
39. *ibid.*, p.9.
 40. Sprat, *op. cit.*, p.142.
 41. Nethercote, *op. cit.*, p.244.
 42. Johnson refers to something in the preface of the 1656 volume, "which was interpreted to denote some relaxation of his loyalty". (*op. cit.*, p.5).
 43. Geoffrey Walton, Metaphysical to Augustan (Cambridge, 1955), p.103.
 44. Maren-Sofie Røstvig declares:- "that his selection of classical sources is the most comprehensive in the annals of English literature, that his translations are as inspired as those of Ashmore are humdrum, and that the prose essays in which these translations are embedded, present a searching analysis of the philosophy expressed by the classical poets". (*op. cit.*, I, 15-16)
 45. For an account of this imagery and Marvell's use of it see above, Chapter XII, Section 6.
 46. H. Wendell Smith, "Cowley, Marvell and the Second Temple", Scrutiny, XIX (1953), p.186.
 47. *ibid.*, p.188.
 48. Nethercote, *op. cit.*, p.269.
 49. Sprat, *op. cit.*, p.142.
 50. Walton is sceptical about Cowley's claims as a poet-philosopher:- "In the Essays the new science seems responsible for little more than his general tendency to simplify his style, to avoid expressions 'too extravagant and Pindarical for Prose!' (*op. Cit.*, p.108)
 51. George Williamson's phrase, *op. cit.*, p.188.
 52. Røstvig considers that:- "The serious poets of the Restoration derived much of their inspiration from Cowley". (*op. cit.*, I, 220)

PART FOUR

ENGLISH POETRY AFTER 1668

Chapter XV

Developments in the Use of Natural Details in
English Poetry after 1668

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a more complete perspective on the poetry of the period 1645-1668, by outlining some of the developments in the poetic use of natural imagery during the years that followed the publication of Paradise Lost and the death of Cowley. This brief survey will be mainly concerned with the period up to 1700, since the early decades of the eighteenth century, leading up to the important landmark of James Thomson's The Seasons (first complete edition 1730), have already been extensively treated by scholars and critics.¹ In spite of some excellent attempts² to look beyond the well-known circle of Restoration Court poets and the achievements in satire and discursive poetry of Dryden, the familiar view of the verse of the early Augustan Age is still that expressed by M.A. Goldberg:-

When the late seventeenth-century poet approaches nature, it is almost wholly with an emphasis upon wit and intellect; of external nature itself little is seen, submerged as it is before the moral and rational.³

The first two sections of this chapter will indicate the survival into the later years of the century of uses of natural details which were especially characteristic of the 1640s and 1650s, and the remaining sections will concentrate on those developments in which external nature plays an increasingly prominent role. An attempt will be made to show that, far from there being little interest in the appearances of nature,

the eighteenth-century descriptive poem⁴ was a direct result of the literary attitudes and techniques of the later seventeenth century. It is hoped, in doing this, to suggest the continuity that exists between the second half of the seventeenth century and the early decades of the eighteenth, as certain genres are seen to decline gradually in significance, while others which had their roots in the Caroline period slowly emerge into prominence and are adapted to meet the challenge of changing conditions and interests.

1. Survivals of Earlier Uses of Natural Imagery in Secular Verse.

Many of the stock images of the Cavalier lyric continue to appear in the collections of the last thirty years of the century, in the slight, but often graceful, lyrics which mark the closing phases of the tradition born of the marriage of metaphysical wit and Jonsonian elegance. Many a poetical beauty of the Restoration still outvies the lily and the rose in bodily charms. A single example, from Matthew Coppinger's Poems, Songs, and Love-Verses (1682), must suffice as a witness to the surviving taste for this kind of fanciful tribute to female beauty:-

Upon her Princely Forehead, there
The azure Veins so clear appear,
In such a rich composure set,
As far exceed the Violet.
But when she please for to disclose
Her blushing Cheeks, the new blown Rose
For shame into its bud doth close,
Not once presuming for to vie,
With such a pure Vermillion Dye.
Her Skin so rare a White does show,
As may lend Beauty to the Snow.⁵

That peculiarly seventeenth-century development of flower imagery, the

address "to a very young lady" deriving from Waller's poem of that title, continues in the post-Restoration period.⁶ J.B. Leishman records several examples later than Marvell's 'Young Love' and 'Little T.C.', but misses two which both appeared in 1673. Matthew Stevenson's 'Upon Madam E.B. of Blakeny in Norf. a beautiful Child' was printed in Norfolk Drollery:-

Sweet pretty blossom, bloomy thing,
The pride, and glory of the Spring

Whilst the pale drooping Lilly stands
Asham'd to see her wither'd hands.
What then may we expect, when time
Has ripen'd her into her prime?

Richard Flecknoe's 'On a Little pretty Child' was part of A Collection of the Choicest Epigrams and Characters:-

Pretty Child! In whom appears,
All the Seeds above thy years,
Of every Beauty, every Grace,
As e'er was sown in Mind or Face!
By the Bud we well may see,
What the Flower in time will be;
And by the Blossom may presage,
What the Fruit of riper age. 8

Both these pieces exploit the topic of "young beauty's power foretold", and both, though mere trifles, manage to preserve an appropriate tone, just this side of sentimentality. Like Prior's 'To a Child of Quality of Five Years Old', which Leishman discusses,⁹ they derive a strength from their predecessors which had disappeared from the English lyric by the time Ambrose Philips composed his tributes to small children. Leishman cites 'To Miss Margaret Pulteney . . . in the Nursery' as an example of the descent into sentimentality and absurdity. Philips's other piece, 'To

Miss Charlotte Pulteney in her Mother's Arms', begins with a perfunctory reference to the image associated with most of these poems:-

Timely blossom, infant fair,
Fondling of a happy pair,
Every morn, and every night,
Their solicitous delight.¹⁰

The loss of vitality and control of tone seems to result partly from Philips's failure to exploit the metaphoric possibilities of the first two words. In all the earlier examples - by Waller, Stanley, Marvell, Stevenson, and Flecknoe - the beauty and future fortunes of the child are imagined in terms of bud, blossom, flower, and fruit, so that the child's qualities and life are felt as part of the pattern of wider experience. For Philips the word "blossom" is no more than a term of endearment. With the loss of the metaphysical habit of pursuing the details of an image Philips has forfeited both the tight logical structure and the sense of contact with other areas of experience which is one of the strengths of the seventeenth-century lyric. Consequently his poems are flaccid and inward-looking, and give an impression of maudlin cosiness.

The artificial treatment of nature associated with the pastoral genre - the pathetic fallacy and the pastoral hyperbole - continued to provide the basis for love-lyrics and elegies. Flowers spring from the earth at the approach of a beautiful woman in Philip Ayres's 'Cynthia Sporting' and Granville's 'To a Lady at her House in the North', and in Anne Killigrew's 'On a young Lady Whose Lord was Travelling': "Celinda nam'd, Flow'rs

remarkable poem 'Upon the Death of Sir William Twisden', examines the ancient figure from a common sense point of view. She begins by couching the fallacy in conditional terms: "Could rivers weep (as sometimes poets dream)". The full force of the conditional statements is revealed in the astonishing second stanza:-

But oh! in vain, things void of sense we call,

.
On things inanimate we would force
Some share of our divided grief,
Whilst Nature (unconcern'd for our relief)
Pursues her settled path, her fixt and steady course,
Leaving those ills which Providence allows
To check our pleasures and contract our brows,
Freely to act their uncontrolled part
Within the centre of the human breast,

.
From whence alone proceed those gathering clouds
Which every outward beauty shrouds;
From whence alone those sad complaints ascend
Which pitying echoes seem to lend;
And when through weeping eyes this world we view,
The ancient flood we to ourselves renew;
Then hasty ruin seizes all around,
All things to desolation tend,
All seems to die with a departed friend,
The earth unpeopled seems, and all again is ~~drawn~~^d.¹⁵

Lady Winchilsea's honesty with her own emotions is remarkable. She first of all refuses to accept the conventional pastoral notion that all nature mourns with the mourner, but then goes on to admit that the convention has a basis in the real experience of grief. It is not a fanciful fabrication of the poets, but an interpretation of deeply felt human emotions. Then, even more remarkably, she examines the psychology that lies behind the illusion, and concludes, as Coleridge was to many years later in his 'Ode to Dejection', "O Lady! we receive^{ei} but what we give,/And in our life

alone does Nature live".

Although the poems and songs of the Restoration were full of scarcely disguised courtly shepherds and nymphs and fanciful conceits of responsive nature, the pastoral was no longer a vehicle for the serious exploration of human nature, as it had been in the hands of Marvell; and, in spite of the revival of critical interest in the genre in the early years of the next century,¹⁶ it was gradually replaced by other types of verse more suited to the period's growing interest in the realities of the countryside. As Geoffrey Tillotson has aptly said, "An age which valued satire could only amuse itself in pastoral".¹⁷

Part I of the Westminster Drollery (1671) contains a belated example of the "metaphysical" type of description occasioned by a freak of the weather. 'On a mighty Rain' begins with the usual cluster of conceits:-

Heaven did not weep, but in its swelling eye
Whole seas of Rheum and moist Catarhs did lie,
Which so bespawl'd the lower world, men see
Corn blasted, and the fruit of every Tree:
Air was condens'd to water, 'gainst their wish,
And all their Fowl were turn'd to flying Fish:
Like Watermen they throng'd to ply a Fare,
And thought it had been navigable air.¹⁸

But the taste for this sort of thing was waning, and the Augustan reaction to unusual natural events is better illustrated by Daniel Defoe's book, The Storm (1704). This is made up chiefly of letters from eye-witnesses in different parts of the country, relating their experiences and describing the damage caused by the hurricane that devastated the country on 26th November, 1703. Fact, rather than fancy, was what the early eighteenth-

century reader wanted in accounts of natural phenomena. Even the pastoral poem that adorns the volume is concerned with what really happened, rather than with a display of hyperbolical wit. It records that the "charming Willows which on Cherwell's bank/Flourish'd, and thriv'd, . . . By hundreds fall", and that "In vain the frighted Cattel climb so high, . . . From Severn's Banks to higher Grounds they run".¹⁹ Defoe also, in a manner typical of the age which produced the physico-theologies, points out in his preface that the storm should be regarded as "the strong Evidence God has been pleas'd to give in this terrible manner to his own Being, which Mankind began more than ever to affront and despise".²⁰ Lady Anne Winchilsea bases her pindaric poem on the same hurricane on a text from Psalm 148: "Winds and storms fulfilling his word", and she too provides a mixture of moral comment and factual description, taking a particular interest in the plight of trees and birds.²¹

2. Survivals of Earlier Uses of Natural Imagery in Religious Verse.

The orthodox emblem-poem survives into the post-Restoration period in Thomas Heyrick's Miscellany Poems (1691), which display a decidedly old-fashioned taste for deriving moral wisdom from the characteristics of the creatures. He draws ingenious lessons from the peacock, the ape, the crocodile, the mole, the "Norway Whale", a sunbeam, the phoenix, the mandrake, and "a Robin-red-breast, that for many years built and dwelt in a Church".²² John Rawlet, a clergyman from the north of England, meditates on the pride of mountains and the humility of valleys in a piece entitled 'On the Sight of Furness Fells, June 19. --71'; and Mrs Jane

Barker perceives types and symbols of eternity, omnipresence, and unity in the "gentle motion" of a stream in 'Sitting by a Rivulet', which was printed in Part I of Poetical Recreations (1688).²³ Mrs Barker's charming poem is noteworthy both for a similarity to Vaughan's 'The Water-fall', and for its strong sense of the stream's actuality, which is most convincingly conveyed in the homely detail of stanza IV:-

A Child in thee may safely go
To rifle thy rich Cabinet;
And his Knees be scarcely wet.

It ends with the kind of moral lesson characteristic of the emblem: the stream, unlike the ocean, is unaffected by the changing moon:-

Happy if we, in our more noble State,
Could so slight all Vicissitudes of Fate.

The Poetick Miscellanies (1687) of John Rawlet contain a number of meditations occasioned by natural events, reminiscent of the methods of George Daniel and Joseph Beaumont. 'On a great Thunder and Storm, June I. 1671', 'Caltness in a Storm: Made in a Stormy Journey, Septemb. 1672', and 'On the Rain that fell in June ---81. after a long Drought, from the beginning of April; begun in my Journey' embody several familiar features of the tradition. In the first, for example, Rawlet comments:-

Thus Ear, and Eye, and Mind, Reason and Sense,
Each hath its Object, learns its Lesson thence.
Which way so ere I turn my eye or thought,
I something find, whence Piety is taught.²⁴

And in the last, the spontaneous joy of the creatures teaches the poet a "noble gratitude", just as Fane had been "taught Thankfulness from

Trees"; and the cheerful songs of the birds "chide and shame" man's grumbling discontent, just as numerous poets had been shamed by the contrasting behaviour of innocent nature.²⁵ The circumstantial, diary-like title, and the delighted details of sight and scent and sound in this poem suggest that Rawlet was not simply reworking traditional material, but was writing from first-hand experience of external nature.

Thomas Flatman, in Poems and Songs (1674), has an 'Anthem for the Evening' and a 'Hymn for the Morning', the latter containing an image associated with many a poetical "sacrifice":-

The pretty lark is mounted high,
And sings her matins in the sky.
Arise, my soul! and thou my voice
In songs of praise, early rejoice!²⁶

Ambrose Philips contributes to the same line of devotional verses with 'A Morning Thought, occasion'd by the early Singing of a Lark', although the personal tone of the opening gives way to a more detached and emblem-like lesson about man's sinful nature:-

Hark! hark! my Soul! - Let the early Birds inspire
Thy groveling Thoughts with pure Celestial Fire,
Who from their temp'rate Sleep awake, and pay
Their thankful Anthems for the new-born Day.
See, how the tuneful Lark is mounted high!
And Poet-like salutes the Eastern Sky;
Aurora's Beauties in his Song does praise,
And calls the blushing Dame to hear his Lays.
But Man (more void of Gratitude) awakes,
And gives no thanks for that sweet Rest he takes;
Looks on the chearful Sun's new-kindled Flame,
Without one thought of Him, from whom it came.
Thus does th'unhallow'd Wretch the Day begin;
Shakes off his Sleep, but shakes not off his Sin!²⁷

The verse form in which Elizabeth Rowe expresses the devout mind's duty to emulate the creatures in praising the Creator suggests that the long line of seventeenth-century devotional lyrics did not die out, but developed into the eighteenth-century hymn. Here are stanzas from two of her pieces, entitled simply 'Hymns':-

Thy num'rous works exalt thee thus,
 And shall I silent be?
 No, rather let me cease to breathe,
 Than cease from praising thee.

* * * * *

While all the glitt'ring starry lamps
 Are lighted in the sky,
 And set their Maker's greatness forth
 To thy admiring eye.²⁸

The image of Flatman's and Philips's poems - and of earlier meditations by Daniel, Vaughan, Beaumont, and Watkyns²⁹ - is found, indeed, in a hymn by Isaac Watts:-

The lark mounts up the sky,
 With unambitious song,
 And bears her Maker's praise on high
 Upon her artless tongue.

Hoxie Neale Fairchild, who quotes this stanza in evidence, considers that, "To judge from the images which abound in his poems, Watts must have been a keen and loving observer of nature".³⁰ While this may be true of Watts the man, it seems much more likely that as a poet he inherited many of his images and attitudes from the devotional poetry of the previous century. A comparison of the lines by Elizabeth Rowe and Isaac Watts with the poems by the earlier generation of poets mentioned above indicates the kind of change which came over religious verse as the seventeenth

century gave place to the eighteenth. The often complex stanza forms and the slow-moving, conversational rhythms of Daniel, Vaughan, and Beaumont suggest a mind confronting specific experiences and exploring their implications in poems of personal, private devotion; the simple forms and regular - even monotonous - movement of the later hymns suggest the simplified, well-established attitudes and material of public worship.

More directly in line of descent from George Herbert than the emblematic poems which are associated with the devotional tradition are those works in which metaphors from nature are used to express the spiritual condition of the poet. (It is significant of the continuing influence of Herbert that Daniel Baker included some lines 'On Mr. George Herbert's Sacred Poems, called, The Temple' in his Poems upon Several Occasions (1697)).³¹ John Norris, one of Herbert's successors in the living of Bemerton, used the familiar imagery of the night sky to describe his sense of desolation in 'The Parting', which appeared in A Collection of Miscellanies (1687):-

But now the better part of me is gone,
My Sun is set, my Turtle flown.
Tho here and there of lesser bliss
Some twinkling Stars give feeble light,
Still there a mournful darkness is,
They shine but just enough to shew 'tis night.³²

John Rawlet, in his 'Midnight Meditations', looks at the stars which "shine in this cold frosty Night", and finds in them "patterns" and "teachers" of future conduct, when providence "shall withdraw/That pleasing Sun-shine of prosperity" from his life.³³ An anonymous university

poet, in the second part of Poetical Recreations (1688), develops more fully the imagery of inner weather in 'On the Divine Spirit':-

So when thy absent Beams begin t'impart
 Again a Solstice on my frozen Heart,
 My Winter's o'er, my drooping Spirits sing,
 And every part revives into a Spring:
 But if thy quickning Beams a while decline,
 And with their Light bless not this Orb of mine,
 A chilly Frost surprizeth every Member,
 And in the midst of June I feel December.³⁴

Even Mrs Rowe, in 'Hymn V', is still exploiting what has become a commonplace of the religious lyric. All the signs that mark the approach of morning, she declares, are of no avail:-

In vain! unless my Saviour's face
 These gloomy clouds controul,
 And dissipate the sullen shades
 That press my drooping soul.³⁵

Again the flagging energy is evident in the easy rhythms which rob the "gloomy clouds" and "sullen shades" of the metaphoric power which similar images have in the verse of Mildmay Fane and other minor poets of the mid-seventeenth century.

Of all the religious poets of the second half of the seventeenth century by far the greatest was Thomas Traherne.³⁶ But because he was a mystical, rather than a devotional poet, his work contains very little that is relevant to this study. Although he rejoiced in a natural world transfigured by the eyes of innocence, there is little attempt in his poetry to describe what he saw; he is concerned rather with conveying some impression of the way in which he saw things. He puts his experience

thus in 'My Spirit':-

This made me present evermore
 With whatso ere I saw.
 An Object, if it were before
 My Ey, was by Dame Natures Law,
 Within my Soul.³⁷

Whereas other poets derived lessons from nature by the operation of reason, Traherne entered into direct spiritual communion with the things around him. In 'Wonder', he writes: "And evry Thing that I did see,/Did with me talk"; and in 'Dumnesse':-

No Ear,
 But Eys them selvs were all the Hearers there.
 And evry Stone, and Evry Star a Tongue,
 And evry Gale of Wind a Curious Song.³⁸

When he does direct attention to the natural scene it is to a landscape bathed in ethereal light:-

The Sun, that gilded all the bordering Woods,
 Shone from the Sky
 To beautify
 My Earthly and my Hevenly Goods;
 Exalted in his Throne on high,
 He shed his Beams
 In golden Streams
 That did illustrat all the Sky;
 Those Floods of Light which he displays,
 Did fill the glitt'ring Ways,
 While that unsufferable piercing Ey
 The Ground did glorify.³⁹

We do catch a glimpse of "golden Corn", "the distant Green/That fring'd the field", "A Wide Magnificent and Spacious Skie", "Clouds here and there like Winged Charets flying", but generally, as K.W. Salter has said,

"there is a thinness in Traherne's imagery . . . His ecstasy overshadows his images. We are given, instead, a list of items, of words serving as pointers".⁴⁰

The brightness which transfigures the external world also illuminates his inner being. In 'Innocence' he employs imagery which links his poetry with that of other religious poets of the period:-

No Darkness then did overshadow,
But all within was Pure and Bright,
No Guilt did Crush, nor fear invade
But all my Soul was full of Light.

A Joyfull Sence and Puritie
Is all I can remember.
The very Night to me was Bright,
Twas Summer in December.⁴¹

But whereas other poets used the imagery of light and darkness and of the seasons to describe the ordinary operations of Grace within the soul, Traherne is describing the extraordinary experiences of the mystic. The external world, for Traherne, was an extension of his own inner radiance, and so its details were of little significance in his poetic account of what he felt. He had no need to learn from nature, to read the Book of the Creatures in the manner of an emblemist, because his intuitive knowledge of the unity and glory of all things made such teaching superfluous.

3. The Scientific Point of View.

In the poetry of the period 1645-1668, and especially in that of Milton and Cowley, we have seen two effects of the new science: direct references to developments in astronomy, anatomy, and the use of the microscope, and

changes in outlook and imagination. Both these aspects of the increasing popular interest in science⁴² are reflected in the verse of the later seventeenth century. Richard Leigh's Poems upon Several Occasions contain a number of references to specific discoveries, and more significantly reveal an obsession with the way in which the human eye copes with the appearances of the external world. 'Greatness in Little'⁴³ begins with an account of the revelations of the telescope:-

Small are those Spots, which in the Moon we view
 Yet Glasses these, like Shades of Mountains shew;
 As what an even Brightness does retain,
 A glorious Level seems, and shining Plain.
 Those Crouds of Stars in the populous Sky,
 Which Art beholds as twinkling Worlds on high,
 Appear to naked, unassisted Sight,
 No more than Sparks, or slender points of Light.

Considering the many marvels which Nature conceals from the naked sight, he turns from "Greatness half-seen" to the "dimme Littleness" of the "imperceptibly small", which the microscope has opened up to human investigation:-

What skill is in the frame of Insects shown?
 How fine the Threds, in their small Textures spun?
 How close those Instruments and Engines knit,
 Which Motion, and their slender Sense transmit?
 Like living Watches, each of these conceals
 A thousand Springs of Life, and moving wheels.
 Each Ligature a Lab'rynth seems, each part
 All wonder is, all Workmanship and Art.

Behind this passage lie Robert Hooke's Micrographia, Browne's fascination with nature's "more curious Mathematicks", Boyle's reference to the tiny "Watches" rather than the "Clocks" of the created world, and Hobbes's notion of the living machine, with its springs and strings and wheels.⁴⁴

Leigh's response to the smaller phenomena is typical of the era of the Royal Society. He is not content to merely wonder at them, and see them as evidence of the Creator's skill; he wants to understand how they work:-

Rather let me this little Greatness know,
Then all the Mighty Acts of Great Ones do.
These Engines understand, rather than prove
An Archimedes, and the Earth remove.
These Atom-Worlds found out, I would despise
Columbus, and his vast Discoveries.

The astonishing revelations of the microscope continued to provide material for the poets of the early eighteenth century. William Diaper devotes a passage of Dryades (1713) to the things that "wond'rous Opticks" have made available to the scrutiny of the "curious Searcher":-

Men Nature in her secret Work behold,
Untwist her Fibres, and her Coats unfold;
With Pleasure trace the Threds of stringy Roots,
The various Textures of the ripening Fruits;
And Animals, that careless live at ease,
To whom the Leaves are Worlds, the Drops are Seas.

.

The azure Dye, which Plums in Autumn boast,
That handled fades, and at a Touch is lost,
(Of fairest Show) is all a living Heap;
And round their little World the lovely Monsters creep.⁴⁵

Perhaps most indicative of the attitude of the period is the intellectual satisfaction, rather than aesthetic or moral interest, which such investigations yield, as men examine details of their universe "with Pleasure".

In 'The Bounds of Sight', Leigh explores the deceptive qualities of the eye, as distance distorts the size and shape of things:-

As parts, in Prospect situated lie,
They pass with diff'ring Shades, into the Eye:

Those nearer to the common Level seen,
 Presented in a fresh, and youthful Green.
 And what afar off does approach the Sky,
 From that, its tincture borrows, and its dye.
 Th' extremest Bounds of Land and Water, bear
 The self same Colour, with the depths of Air.
 A false Blue, claiming from their Place, and Site,
 The Privilege of Distance, and of Height. 46

His delight in a prospect is not aesthetic. He sees in a landscape not a picturesque arrangement of shapes and colours, but an intriguing example of the way in which the human organ transmutes the reality of what it looks upon. In 'The Intellectual Prospect' he pursues these enquiries further, into the unknown properties of the mind itself:-

The Eye, with unknown Art, does all contain,
 And with like Art, transmits 'em to the Brain.
 The Landscape's vary'd Scene resembled there,
 The same appears in Fancy's Hemisphere.
Hills, whose blue Height at distance fill'd the Eye,
 Like Hills, in the High Countries of the Sky;
 Seem in the Thought as full of lofty State,
High without raising, without swelling great.

.
Fancy, all these Resemblances does trace,
 Each Figure frames, and for each Figure, place.
 Moulds all the Shapes, shapeless itself, as Air,
 Abounding yet, with all presented there.
 Though void of Colour, as the naked Light,
 Or what no less is unadorn'd, the Sight;
 Does Clouds in Thoughts of sev'ral Colours show,
 And all the gaudy Pride o' th' Heav'nly Bow. 47

These are the very matters which Locke was to explore with more philosophic precision in An Essay Concerning Human Understanding. Marvell was greatly concerned with the ways in which the eye distorts what it sees, and with the mind's properties as a storehouse of sense impressions and a creative power - "that ocean where each kind/Does straight its own resemblance

find", which can create "Far other worlds, and other seas"; but he had used these qualities of the human creature in his exploration of moral and metaphysical dimensions of life, Leigh is more limited, and more materialistic, in his interest in these phenomena as scientific facts.

The reference to "naked Light" being "void of Colour" suggests that Leigh may have been acquainted with Newton's hypotheses of the relationship between light and colour, which were communicated to Cambridge students as early as 1668-69, and to the Royal Society in a paper of 1672, although Professor Nicolson states that there is "no evidence that those early lectures of Newton on optics affected lay imagination".⁴⁸ This possibility is made more likely by Leigh's poem 'Light', which clearly owes something to Cowley's famous ode.⁴⁹ After apostrophizing light as "Divinest Excellence", and describing the dawn as a resurrection from chaos, he writes:-

As thousand of thy subtle Darts, do pierce
The shaded Spaces, of the Universe.
The painted Scenes above, at once they show,
And gay Dominions of the Eye below.
All gaudy Royalties of Sight, that lie
Extended far, as the blue Sea and Sky;
What Heav'nly Gayety is, or Earthly Pride,
Light stained is, or Light diversify'd.

The "subtle Darts" must surely be rays of light in the scientific, rather than the generally descriptive sense, and the last line must refer to the resolution of "naked Light" into the diverse colours of the spectrum. If this is so, Leigh was the first poet to exploit the new discoveries in poetry, a good many years before Pope in the Essay on Criticism and Blackmore in the Creation.⁵⁰

Another poet who reflected the scientific attitude of mind in some of his work was Charles Cotton. His reaction to the Derbyshire countryside, in The Wonders of the Peake (1681),⁵¹ is not to gape in amazement, but to try to explain the unusual phenomena that he sees. The stalagmites in Pool's Hole are carefully described, with an account of their formations:-

which do still increase
In height, and bulk, by a continual drop,
Which upon each distilling from the top,
And falling still exactly on the Crown,
There break themselves to mists, which trickling down,
Crust into stone, and (but with leasure) swell
The sides, and still advance the Miracle.
(ll. 118-124)

Pool's Lanthorn is described with mathematical accuracy:-

Which, on a Rocks sharp ridge taking its root,
Rises from thence in a neat round turn'd foot
Twelve inches high, or more, wherein are all
The mouldings of a round-turn'd Pedestal.
Whence bulbing out in figure of a Sphere,
Some two foot and a half Diameter,
The whole above is finish't in a small
Pellucid Spire crown'd with a Crystal Ball.
(ll. 163-170)

The effect of this is very different from the similar measurements given in Wordsworth's 'The Thorn'. Here they are a witness to Cotton's intense interest in the details of the physical phenomenon simply as it is.

Tides-Well, where every so often a small spring shoots high into the air, puzzles the poet. He himself gives up speculation about the cause of this, since even Hobbes is not sure on this matter. He quotes the philosopher's explanation, offered in the translation of De Mirabilibus Pecci published in 1678, and ventures to suggest a flaw in Hobbes's

argument (ll. 458-83). At Elden-Hole he shows a keen interest in the sound of stones falling into the gaping earth:-

Whilst, as it strikes, the sound by turns we note,
When nearer flat, sharper when more remote,
As the hard walls, on which it strikes, are found
Fit to reverberate the bellowing sound:
When, after falling long, it seems to hiss,
Like the old Serpent in the dark Abyss:
(ll. 537-42)

and he goes on to describe how he has tried plumbing the hole with a line and weight (ll. 675-81).

Cotton was clearly a man of lively mind and keen observational powers, who was moving away from the emblematic approach to the natural world, and towards a more objective interest in things themselves. We have seen elsewhere his expert knowledge of the insects which haunted his beloved river, the silver Dove.⁵² The Wonders of the Peake was obviously written for readers with quite different expectations from those who found profit and pleasure in William Prynne's Mount-Orgeuil a generation before.

4. The Real Object.

Related to Cotton's precise delineation of the objects of the Peak District are poems in which the writer has followed Cowley's advice to the painter, and allowed the "real object" to "command/Each judgment of his Eye, and Motion of his Hand". Sir William Temple's lines 'Upon My Lady Giffard's Loery' contain a detailed portrait of the bird's physical appearance:-

About a gentle Turtle's was the size,
The sweetest shape that e'er surprized eyes.

A longish hawked bill, and yellow brown,
 A slick black velvet cap upon the crown.
 His back a scarlet mantle cover'd o'er,
 One purple splotch upon his neck he wore.
 His jetty eyes were circled all with flame.
 His swelling Breast was, with his back, the same.
 All down his belly a deep violet hue
 Was gently shaded to an azure blue.
 His spreading wings were green, to brown inclin'd,
 But with a sweet pale straw colour were lin'd.
 His tail, above was purples mixt with green,
 Under, a colour such as ne'er was seen,
 When like a Fan it spread, a mixture bold
 Of green and yellow grideline and gold.⁵³

The second part of Poetical Recreations (1688) contains a poetical rhapsody 'Upon a Flock of Gold-Finches Seen in the Morning', which has some affinities with the "metaphysical" type of description, in that the poet weaves in ingenious classical similes and other fanciful conceits, but a large part of it is devoted to quite precise physical description:-

Now in light hoverings they their Bodies poise,
 And hang in Aequilibriums without noise.
 The Amorous Wind in gentle Whispers sings,
 And coyly kisses their Enamell'd Wings.
 In curling Waves it pleats their silken Plumes,
 And from their spioy Breasts doth suck Perfumes;
 Then softly swells, and heaves its rising Weight,
 The mounting Birds enjoy a noble height:
 There in a spangled Crescent they appear,
 And with a flying Rain-bow gild the Air.

.
 With such soft Ayrs did all the Birds descend,
 And their bright Course to the next Bush they bend.
 With purling Noise their flutt'ring Wings they clapt,
 As if they had for Entertainment rapt.

.
 Each awfull twig gave an obsequious nod;
 And bowing, stoop't unto its welcome load.
 And now the glitt'ring Bush on high displays
 Its streaming Branches, deck't with chirping Rays.⁵⁴

The style here is far less matter-of-fact than that of Temple's poem, and the poet is less single-minded in his descriptive purpose, but he does capture accurately a number of details: the way the flock hovers, and rises on a current of air; the way the breeze "pleats" the feathers; the impression of the whole flock flying in a crescent, and streaming down to cover the bush with their bright colour; the peculiar noise of the many wings; and the way each twig bends slightly as it becomes a perch

Not quite the same in function, in that it acts as an extended simile for a human quality, is Lady Winchilsea's description of courting doves, in 'Jealousy is the Rage of Man':-

Whilst with his falling wings, the courtly dove
Sweeps the low earth and singles out his love,
Now murmurs soft, then with a rolling note
Extends his crop, and fills his am'rous throat,
On ev'ry side accosts the charming fair,
Turns round and bows with an enticing air:
She, carelessly neglecting all his pain,
Or shifts her ground, or pecks the scatter'd grain.
But if he cease, and through the flight would range,
(For though renown'd for truth, ev'n doves will change)
The mildness of her nature laid aside,
The seeming coldness, and the careless pride,
On the next rival in a rage she flies:
Smooth ev'ry clinging plume with anger lies,
Employs in feeble fight her tender beck,
And shakes the fav'rite's parti-colour'd neck.⁵⁵

The dragging of the wings, the puffing out of the breast, the low cooing sound of the male, and the flattening of the feathers by the angry female: all these details are the fruit of precise observation. Especially interesting is the Countess's parenthetical rejection of the traditional emblematic significance of the dove as a constant lover, in favour of the facts

which she has seen for herself.

All these poems, though not in themselves "scientific" in inspiration, are born of the new atmosphere of the Enlightenment, which encouraged an interest in the real appearances of the physical world, and which prepared the way for poems in which description from the life could be accepted as an exclusive subject for verse.

5. The Georgic and the Physico-Theology.

The age in which these attitudes were becoming more and more common, and for which the pastoral had become an inconsequential plaything, was in need of some respectable poetic form for the expression of its new interests. For an age which was also strongly influenced by the doctrines of neo-classicism, a respectable form meant one for which there was a classical sanction. Such a form was found in Virgil's Georgics, which Dryden was to declare "the Divinest part of all his writings".⁵⁶ In the latter part of the century, Virgil was replacing Horace as the most powerful influence on English poetry. As one critic has said, "Vergil was a part of the air that the man of letters breathed in the pseudo-classic period".⁵⁷ It is significant that, among all his other labours as a translator towards the end of his life, Dryden found time to produce what he obviously intended to be the definitive English version of Virgil's works.⁵⁸ Geoffrey Tillotson has written that, "It is the 'Georgics' more than anything else that prepare the mind of the eighteenth-century poet for writing his nature-poem";⁵⁹ and John Chalker, in his recent study, The English Georgic, has suggested that, "the popularity of the Georgics in

the eighteenth century derived from the fact that Virgil expressed, in unusual combination, attitudes which had a particular potency for the period".⁶⁰ These attitudes ranged from the aesthetic to the scientific, social, religious, and even political. There was room in the georgic for description of landscape, for practical advice about country occupations, for a demonstration of God's existence as Creator, for a scientific examination of natural phenomena, for an exaltation of the virtues and rewards of labour, and for the praise of a stable economic, social, and political situation such as that which had been established during the first Augustan Age, and was being emulated by the second.

Besides numerous translations,⁶¹ ranging from complete versions to short passages, there were two major examples of the original georgic in the latter part of the seventeenth century, neither of them in English. One was Cowley's Plantarum, and the other was the French poet, Rapin's, Of Gardens, which was translated into English couplets by James Gardiner in 1706. The two most important works for the future history of the form in England were John Philips's Cyder (1706) and Richard Blackmore's The Creation (1712). The former was the poem which "fixed the English georgic as a type and determined its form",⁶² and took the significant step of adopting Miltonic blank verse as its medium. It was the direct ancestor of Thomson's Seasons, Dyer's The Fleece (1757), and James Grainger's The Sugar-Cane (1764). Blackmore's poem was in heroic couplets, and began a line of versified physico-theologies, combining scientific and religious themes in the manner of John Ray's The Wisdom of God and William Derham's Physico-Theology, which included Richard Collins's Nature Displayed (1727)

and Henry Baker's The Universe (1727).

The other classical poet who was becoming increasingly important as an influence on the English poets' treatment of nature was Lucretius. Wolfgang Bernard Fleischmann's study, Lucretius and English Literature 1680-1740, suggests two major factors in the rising popularity of the De Rerum Natura: on the one hand, Dryden translated a number of passages from the poem;⁶³ and on the other, it offered a model for the poem of "natural philosophy", and because of its descriptive elements met some of the same needs as the Georgics. Ignoring or excusing the atheistic aspects of his thought, the men of the early eighteenth century saw Lucretius primarily "as a descriptive naturalist and his poetry as of a kind with Vergil's Georgics".⁶⁴ Blackmore was especially indebted to the Roman poet, although The Creation was specifically designed as an antidote to the atheism of Democritus, Epicurus, and Lucretius. Fleischmann quotes the conclusion of Charles T. Harrison's doctoral dissertation that, in refuting the philosophy of the De Rerum Natura, "Blackmore simply appropriated the design, the method, and the poetic details of Lucretius".⁶⁵

The poetic diction which is so marked a feature of eighteenth-century descriptions of nature certainly did not originate in this period. As we have seen,⁶⁶ Du Bartas was a major source, and "winged choirs" and "scaly nations" abound in the verse of the earlier seventeenth century. But the growing use of Virgil and Lucretius as models for descriptive poetry was largely responsible for the widespread appearance of this kind of language in the eighteenth century. John Arthos has demonstrated that the original

impulse behind such phrases as "liquid air" and "feathered kind" was scientific:-

It is the principle of definition, and various terms of natural description, controlled by this principle, are used to form phrases of definition. Such phrases make definitions by referring an object to its place in a philosophic or mythological scheme.⁶⁷

The long lists of words especially associated with "poetic diction", which he provides in the appendices to his book, furnish ample evidence that later poets derived their phraseology and their stylistic peculiarities from classical sources, among which Virgil and Lucretius were prominent. It also becomes clear that Dryden, especially in his translations, was an important bridgehead between the classics and later English poets. R.A. Brower has suggested that Dryden made a deliberate effort in his translation of Virgil's works to develop an English idiom that could serve as a counterpart to the style of the Roman poet, and he concludes that the experience left a permanent mark on Dryden's own use of language:-

Dryden's poetic style was directly influenced by making the translation. For in the poetry which Dryden wrote afterwards he did not wholly lay aside the diction which he had created mainly for his special purpose.⁶⁸

One interesting instance of a later poet's debt to Dryden has escaped the attention of Bonamy Dobrée. In the Foreword to the Muses' Library edition of Diaper's works, he picks out line 521 of Dryades, which describes how snakes "Brandish the Tongue, and raise the azure Crest", and comments:- "We feel that 'brandish' is exactly the right word".⁶⁹ The right word it may be, but it was not Diaper's invention, as Dobrée implies. Diaper

probably derived it from Dryden's translation of Virgil, where it was used three times, once in Book III of the Georgics ("brandishing his forked tongue"), once in Book II of the Aeneid ("brandishes by fits his forked tongue"), and once in Book V of the Aeneid ("she brandishes her tongue").⁷⁰ But even Dryden was not the originator of this use of the word to describe the serpent, for he could have found it in John Ogilby's translation of the same passage of Book II of the Aeneid: "Triple Stings brandisht from his hissing Mouth".⁷¹ The vocabulary of natural description, like the poetic genres of georgic and philosophic-descriptive verse, was part of the eighteenth-century poet's inheritance from the seventeenth.

6. Descriptions of External Nature.

Other genres which directed attention outwards to the details of the countryside were being further developed during the later seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Especially important were the various branches of the topographical poem: the praise of a country house and estate; the hill poem; the region poem. Thomas Shipman's 'Belvoir: Being a Pindarick Ode upon Belvoir-Castle, the Seat of the Earls of Rutland; made in the Year 1679'⁷² is mainly devoted to an account of the earl's family, the recent troubles, and the interior of the castle, but one section describes the ascent of the hill on which it is built, and the prospects that spread below. The visiting poet is delighted by the changing scenes that are revealed as he follows the path that circles the hill like a spiral staircase:-

Each step, as circling round we went,
A prospect of new pleasures did present;

Now, o'er the fruitful Vale we wondering stood,
 Strait hanging o'er the neighbouring wood.
 The softness of the Vale doth now delight,
 When at next step we chang'd the scene,
 And a new scene of joys did intervene;
 The neighbouring hills do entertain our sight,
 And, in their shady, rural dress,
 Do represent a civil wilderness.
 All objects from below now lessen'd show,
 Fields shrink to acres, towns to houses grow;
 The vast extended plain is a small compass now.

The fascination of distance is a recurring feature of this kind of poem, and is another manifestation of the interest in the way in which the eye sees things which we have encountered in the more scientific Leigh. This passage is also typical of the genre in the extremely generalized impression of fruitful vales, neighbouring woods and extended plains, and in the taste for nature softened by art - for the "civil wilderness" that reminds one of Herrick's praise of "wild civility".

From the top of the hill the poet looks around at the varied landscape:-

Sometimes on the rude mountains' tops we rove,
 The scene of innocence and untaught love;

.

Straight when we turn our eye,
 The cultivated Vale new sweets displays,
 Its head with corn and flow'ry meads arrays,
 Th' effects of toil and artful industry.
 The one doth nature's naked form impart,
 The other doth express't improv'd by art:

The sort of scenery which most appealed to the Augustan sensibility is summed up in the line "Th' effects of toil and artful industry": this is the landscape of the Georgics - the vision of a land cultivated and prosperous. The wilder aspects of the scene - "the rude mountains' tops" - serve an aesthetic purpose, providing variety and setting off the peaceful

farmland below. The gazing eye takes in the whole prospect:-

Until at last
 (Objects still lessening as they're farther plac'd)
 Towns springing up in crowds,
 Appearing from afar,
 On some far-distant coast,
 Its bold and daring flight
 Is with a pleasing error lost,
 In mists and blueish clouds,
 On hills that such appear,
 Where the descending heaven on earth doth seem to light.

The effect of this is similar to a Claude landscape painting, with its glimpses of towns and sea in the background, and the hazy distance of blue clouds and hills where sky and land merge. This poem, with its contrast of "rude mountains" and "cultivated Vale", and its sense of perspective, illustrates R.A. Aubin's remark that the hill-poem grew in popularity because "it aided in subordinating the parts to the whole design: the individual details of the scene could be shown in their proper relations".⁷³

In the prospect-poems of this period, deriving their aesthetic approach to landscape from Italianate painting, it is the "whole design" that matters most. Precision of detail may occur - as it does, for example, in Pope's Windsor Forest (1704) - but it is not allowed to usurp interest from the larger pattern in which it is contained.⁷⁴

Of several other topographical pieces of the period little need be said. Thomas Otway's Windsor Castle is chiefly a panegyric on the late Charles II and his successor James II, which includes a few scanty references to an idealized landscape peopled by shepherds and "jolly hinds".⁷⁵

'A Description of Mother Ludwell's Cave', possibly by Swift,⁷⁶ describes the "awfull Fabrick built by Nature's hand" which is found in the grounds

of Sir William Temple's seat at Moor Park, and contains generalized descriptions of "meadows interlaced with silver flouds" and "the frizled thickets, and the taller woods". The "frizled thickets" are mainly remarkable as an instance of early borrowing from Paradise Lost.⁷⁷ H. Walwyn's 'A Country Seat. To the Honoured J.W. Gent.', printed in Poems on Several Occasions (1699), is about Longworth, and contains accounts of the house, the gardens, a hill with a prospect, the Wye valley and the Malvern hills.⁷⁸ Francis Manning, in his dedication of Greenwich Hill (1697) to Dr Henry Newton, suggests that the subject of his poem would have been more worthy of Sir John Denham than Cooper's Hill because it affords "such variety of Prospect".⁷⁹ Manning's poem is clearly written in emulation of Denham, but it is characteristic of the later period that he is more concerned with describing what he sees than with moralizing. When he turns to the Thames, however, he adopts a style somewhat similar to his master's, describing the river in anthropomorphic terms reminiscent of the famous passage from Cooper's Hill:-

Now gentle Thames, concern'd for our delight,
 Presents a hundred windings to our sight.
 Whish as they turn, still flow with such a grace,
 Giving so much advantage to each place
 They run between, that no Maeander shews
 Such turnings, or so fair a view bestows.
 See with what joyful haste He takes his course,
 Yet how serene, and how averse to force.
 No rapid Waves throughout his Chanel roll,
 Yet swift as Fame, that flys without controul.
 Tho' lib'ral, yet within his bounds he flows,
 And tho' reserv'd, He visits, as He goes,
 The Neighb'ring Meads, and cherishing the Earth,
 Presents the Mower with a plenteous birth.⁸⁰

The effect of this, however, is not to draw moral wisdom from the natural scene; it is as if the qualities of the human world are being used in order to present a completer impression of what the river itself is like. Manning wants to convey his pleasure in what is presented "to our sight". Whereas in Cooper's Hill, as M.A. Goldberg has said, "the abstract and intellectual control the sensual and ocular",⁸¹ in Greenwich Hill it is the sheer delight in scenery which governs the poet's method.

Most of these topographical pieces are significant more as an indication of the growing interest in the genre, which was to lead in time to such poems as Dyer's 'Grongar Hill' (1726) and Thomson's The Seasons, than as successful treatments of scenery in themselves. But there was one example in the later seventeenth century which has considerable literary merit, and which contains a great deal of detailed description, quite unlike the generalized prospects of 'Belvoir' and Greenwich Hill. This is Charles Cotton's The Wonders of the Peake (1681), the only poem of the period which attempts to give an accurate impression of an entire district. In 1678 an edition of Thomas Hobbes's De Mirabilibus Pecci had appeared, with an English translation on facing pages. Cotton obviously knew this work, since he refers to it in his own poem, but he owes very little to it. There are one or two minor echoes of a phrase or an image, but Cotton takes the wonders in a different order from Hobbes, and goes into a great deal more detail about them. He adds local stories that the older poet knew nothing about, and generally gives a much more complete and vivid account of the area.

Although Hobbes makes a point of stating that he hired a guide, and once or twice mentions how his party reached a height "after many a tug and weary Strain", and were "halfe breathless", his poem is much less convincing as a personal record than Cotton's. Cotton manages, while giving a detailed and concise description of the things of interest, also to stamp his own personality on the poem. His reaction to Elden-Hole is an amusing example:-

A formidable Scissure gapes so wide,
 Steep, black, and full of horror, that who dares
 Look down into the Chasme, and keeps his hair
 From lifting off his hat, either has none,
 Or for more modish curls casheers his own.
 It were injurious I must confess,
 By mine to measure braver Courages:
 But when I peep into't, I must declare,
 My heart still beats, and eyes with horror stare.
 (ll. 499-507)

In his account of the exploration of Peake's Arse, Cotton writes:-

Now in your way a soft descent you meet,
 Where the sand takes th'impression of your feet.
 (ll. 842-43)

This gives the sense of his having actually trodden over the ground, instead of his merely reporting that there is a sandy floor. Similarly, after describing his climb to another level of Pool's Hole, he renders very vivid the experience of the descent:-

Two Hob-nail Peakrills, one on either side,
 Your arms supporting like a bashful Bride,
 Whilst a third steps before, kindly to meet
 With his broad shoulders your extended feet,
 And thus from Rock to Rock they slide you down,
 Till to their footing you may add your own.
 (ll. 290-95)

Some idea of Cotton's descriptive, as distinct from his narrative, skills has been given in the earlier reference to his scientific turn of mind. One more example must suffice to illustrate his keen eye and his knack of presenting what he sees in words:-

At th'instep of just such another Hill,
There creeps a Spring that makes a little Rill.

.
This Fountain is so very very small,
Th'Observer hardly can perceive it crawl
Thorough the sedg, which scarcely in their beds
Confess a Current by their waving heads.
I'th'Chinke through which it issues to the day,
It stagnant seems, and makes so little way,
That Thistle-down without a breeze of Air,
May lie at Hull, and be becalmed there.
(ll. 404-17)

Nothing could be more precise and more economical than the image of the "instep" of a hill, or the phrase "Confess a Current"; and the final detail of the becalmed thistle-down provides just that touch of personal observation which is needed to bring the scene before the reader's eye.

Both types of description evident in the late seventeenth-century topographical poem - the generalized prospect of Manning and Walwyn and the precise eye for detail of Cotton - flowed into the widening stream of descriptive verse in the eighteenth century. The former is well represented by Addison's 'A Letter from Italy' (1701), the anonymous 'Flora Triumphans. Wanstead Garden' (1712), and Richard Gwinnett's 'Bereford', written some time during the reign of Queen Anne, which contains the following lines, typical of the traditions:-

Hence looking outwards, the surveying Eye,
A large and various Prospect doth descry.

Towns, Churches, Mountains, pleasant Fields, and Woods,
 Enamel'd Meadows, and transparent Floods.
 Below the Kine, the fleecy Sheep Above,
 In numerous Flocks about their Pastures rove.
 Hills gently rising terminate the Sight,
 And close the Landscape with compleat Delight.⁸²

The latter type is represented by William Diaper's 'Brent',⁸³ which treats the district it describes largely with "metaphysical" ingenuity, but which also contains such precise observations as:-

No sheltering hedg, no tree, or spreading bough
 Obstruct their course, but unconfin'd they blow;

and the delightful line, which looks forward to Cowper: "The good old Hen clucks boldly thro' the stream".

Another genre which continued to flourish as the century wore on, and which was destined to furnish the basis for the most important descriptive poem of the eighteenth century, was the season poem. The ancient topos of the spring-poem is represented by Matthew Prior's 'A Hymn to the Spring' (1686), and 'To the Returning Sun. By J.H.', which appeared in Examen Poeticum (1693).⁸⁴ A significant development is the cycle of poems dealing with all four seasons.⁸⁵ Philip Ayres produced a sequence, linked by a refrain; Charles Cotton wrote some Winter Quatrains, and began work on Summer Quatrains, which suggests that he intended a series of four poems on the seasons, to match his Morning-Noon-Evening-Night series; and Alexander Pope's youthful Pastorals were devoted to the four seasons. 'Winter' is typical of Ayres's treatment of a season: the details are not particularly original, but the poem is less decorative and artificial

than the bravura exercises that were common in the earlier part of the century:-

When Autumn's past, sharp eastern winds do blow,
 Thick clouds obscure the day,
 Frost makes the currents stay,
 The aged mountains hoary are with snow.
 Altho' the Winter rage;
 The wronged trees revenge conspire,
 Its fury they assuage;
 Alive they serve for fence, when dead for fire;
 All creatures from its outrage fly,
 Those which want shelter or relief must die.⁸⁶

Charles Cotton's Winter Quatrains have a strain of "metaphysical" description running through them. Stanza XXVIII has a wit and a vigour reminiscent of Eldred Revett's descriptive efforts:-

With bleak and with congealing Winds,
 The Earth in shining Chains he binds;
 And still as he doth farther pass,
 Quarries his way with Liquid Glass.⁸⁷

Elsewhere, the descriptive technique is less conceited, but no less vigorous:-

See where a Liquid Mountain rides,
 Made of innumerable Tides,
 And tumbles headlong to the Strand,
 As if the Sea would come to Land.

It is interesting that the only season poem that Cotton completed was this one on winter. Although descriptions of winter obviously occur in earlier poetry - we have seen some of the descriptive images developed to cope with the theme⁸⁸ - there was not the same tradition of devoting whole poems to the subject, as there was of writing spring songs. Shake-

Spenser's "When icicles hang by the wall" is a notable exception. But as poets began to think of description as a suitable basis for whole poems, they seem to have turned to winter scenes with special interest. Three of the important landmarks in the development of eighteenth-century descriptive nature poetry are winter-pieces: Ambrose Philips's Winter Piece from Copenhagen (1709),⁸⁹ Riccaltoun's 'A Winter's Day' (1726),⁹⁰ and the first of Thomson's The Seasons, the famous 'Winter' of 1726.

It is indicative of the growing interest in natural description that among the poems of Horace that were translated by so many poets of the last decades of the seventeenth century, those which contain accounts of the seasons were special favourites. Book IV, Ode 7 was rendered by Matthew Coppinger and by an unknown hand in Sylvae (1685), and Book I, Ode 4 appears in Miscellany Poems (1684).⁹¹ Both these odes begin with an account of the coming of spring. Even more popular was Book I, Ode 9, which opens with a brief description of winter landscape. Sir Edward Sherburne had translated this earlier in the century, and there were further versions by Philip Ayres, Dryden, Congreve, and Thomas Brown.⁹²

7. Retirement and Solitude.

The genres we have looked at so far were those which encouraged an objective interest in nature, whether it be the scientific curiosity of Leigh and Cotton, the practical or philosophic concerns of the imitators of Virgil's Georgics and Lucretius, the quest for aesthetic design in landscape of the topographical poets, or the movement towards pure description of the season poets. For evidence of a more subjective interest

in country life and natural surroundings we must turn to the developments that were taking place in the tradition of retirement poetry. The popularity of the beatus ille motif continued unabated during the later decades of the century, with a multitude of translations of the classical sources such as Horace, Martial, and Seneca. George Granville, for example, imitated the famous second chorus from Seneca's Thyestes, Act II, in Examen Poeticum (1693); and John Rawlet worked an amusing variation on the same passage in his concluding lines:-

In this obscure, quiet recess shall I
An honest Country Parson live and die.⁹³

Besides the translations, there were numerous original pieces extolling the pleasures of a country life, some in the form of invitations to friends to share in the poet's idyllic existence,⁹⁴ some as letters to or from the country envying or recommending the retired life,⁹⁵ and some simple expressions of the poet's philosophy of retirement.⁹⁶ But significant changes were being effected in the poets' attitudes. More and more they were looking to the country life as a source of positive pleasures, rather than as a means of escape from the political and religious oppression of an earlier age. This element had been present in the poetry of the mid-century,⁹⁷ but it now became the prime motive of men who had no practical need to keep away from the city and the centres of power. Another significant change was the emphasis on the enjoyment of a retired life, rather than on the profit. The spiritual values which men like Benlowes, Vaughan, Beaumont, and Fane had found, either in the quiet which was conducive to

contemplation and self-knowledge, or in the actual details of the countryside which embodied moral and divine truths, were being replaced by the aesthetic and social delights of the country gentleman. Maren-Sofie Røstvig explains this fundamental change in outlook:-

What used to be a defence of an introspective, half religious way of life was transformed, some time after the turn of the half-century, into an apology for the enjoyment of a secular way of life, pursued, it is true, in the countryside and often in solitary state, but under the auspices of Epicurus or Catullus rather than Seneca or Plato. The Hortulan Saint who fights on bended knees was ousted by an urbane gentleman who chose retirement because he abhorred business, preferring instead a life marked by pleasant ease and privacy.⁹⁸

The influence of Cowley's Essays in Verse and Prose, with his ideal of "a small house and large garden, with very moderate conveniences joyned to them", is strongly felt. John Rawlins ends his poem 'On Solitude' with an explicit acknowledgement:-

Thus on the Banks of Thames great Cowley chose
His private Chertsey for repose;
Cowley whose Verse like those rich streams,
So deep, as clear, in various numbers flows,
And long shall last as Thames.⁹⁹

Daniel Baker, in 'The Retreat', abandons "this great tumultuous Town" for a Cowley-like idyll:-

Give me free Nature's solid Goods
Open Fields, and secret Woods,
Healthful Hills, and crystal Floods.
A small, but sprucely furnish'd House,
A Garden for Delight and Use.
A learned Friend, and gentle Muse.¹⁰⁰

John Pomfret, in 'The Choice', perhaps the best known of all these accounts

of the perfect life, speaks in much the same terms:-

Near some fair town I'd have a private seat,
Built uniform, not little, nor too great:
Better, if on a rising ground it stood;
On this side fields, on that a neighbouring wood.

.
A little garden, grateful to the eye;
And a cool rivulet run murmuring by:
On whose delicious banks a stately row
Of shady lines, or sycamores, should grow.

.
I'd have a clear and competent estate,
That I might live genteely, but not great:
As much as I could moderately spend;
A little more, sometimes t'oblige a friend.¹⁰¹

There was another aspect to this Epicurean attitude to the country life. Many poets imported into the retirement poems frankly erotic elements. The grove which had provided a setting for the religious poet and the quasi-mystical communion with nature, became for some Restoration poets a spot for sexual enjoyment. Matthew Coppinger begins his 'A Pastoral Courtship' with the lines:-

Come, my Dear Love, into this Grove,
This Paradise shall cover
The secret Pleasures of our Love,
Which we will here discover.¹⁰²

Aphra Behn's works are full of such erotic retreats;¹⁰³ and Rochester's ✓
version of Horace's Book II, Ode 16 transforms the grave moral tone of the conclusion into an appeal to enjoy the pleasures offered to lovers in the spring countryside:-

Since all the World's thus gay and free,
Why should not we?
Let's thus accept our Mother Nature's Treat,
And please our selves with all that's sweet.¹⁰⁴

Natural details play a very small part in most of the retirement poems of the period under review, usually being limited to a few perfunctory references, as in the lines from Baker's 'The Retreat' quoted above. It may well be, as Bonamy Dobrée says of the lack of detail in Walsh's 'The Retirement':-

that in the early eighteenth century a clear reference to nature was enough to arouse a complex of responses: the setting was given, and the reader was expected to fill in the details with whatever attendant delights he might associate with them. It was only courteous; the reader was supposed to have some experience of his own.¹⁰⁵

Nevertheless, there are a number of poems in which more particular sights and sounds are evoked as part of the pleasure to be derived from life in the country. Mrs Jane Barker's description of a grove, in the first section of her 'The Prospect of a LANDSKIP', contains, amidst various nature-as-art images similar to those in Lovelace's 'Aramantha', a couplet about the effects of sunlight: "Then through some space his brightest Beams appear,/Which do's erect a Golden Pillar there".¹⁰⁶ The image fits in with the "Canopy of Bows" and the "grassie Cloth of State", but has an additional visual aptness. Thomas Flatman's pindaric ode, 'The Retirement', is superior as poetry to most of the examples of the genre in this period, and the opening of stanza II is of special interest for several reasons:-

I list'ned heedfully around,
But not a whisper there was found.
The murmuring brook hard by,
As heavy, and as dull as I,
Seem'd drowsily along to creep;
It ran with undiscover'd pace,
And if a pebble stopp'd the lazy race,
'Twas but as if it started in its sleep.¹⁰⁷

There is a sense here of personal experience, rather than generalized philosophy and aesthetics, which is rare in the later seventeenth century. The poet has captured not just an ideal of country peace, but the mood of a specific moment, in which he feels in tune with nature. The suggestion of pathetic fallacy in the drowsiness of the stream, which matches his own heaviness, is unlike the usual artificial effect of this device in pastoral elegies and fanciful love-poems. There is more of a Romantic feeling of correspondence between the poet and his setting, which is even stronger when the lines quoted above are read in the context supplied by the first stanza, ending:-

Weary, and faint, and full of thought,
 Though for what cause I knew not well,
 What I ail'd I could not tell,
 I sate me down at an aged poplar's root,
 Whose chiding leaves excepted and my breast,
 All the impertinently busied world inclin'd to rest.

The mood of causeless melancholy, the reading of that mood into the natural surroundings, and the finely observed and expressed detail of the stream starting in its sleep when it meets a pebble in its course - all these are quite different from the normal run of seventeenth-century retirement poems, and look forward to a later age in which heightened awareness of self and heightened awareness of nature combined to produce a genuine nature poetry.

Flatman's ode is not unique in its age, however, since both Charles Cotton and Lady Anne Winchilsea also provide a hint of things to come. Cotton's 'The Retirement' (1676)¹⁰⁸ contains most of the features of the

tradition: the rejection of the "busy World", the praise of the innocence and liberty of the country, and the apostrophe to solitude, "That man acquainted with himself dost make", and "that keep'st the Soul awake". But Cotton is not singing the praises of country life in general, or of some vague ideal culled from books. He expresses his delight in his own beloved river, the silver Dove, his own "beloved Rocks", and his own "beloved Caves" - the landscape which he knows intimately. He is obviously writing from personal experience in stanza VIII:-

Oh my beloved Rocks! that rise
 To awe the Earth, and brave the Skies,
 From some aspiring Mountain's crown
 How dearly do I love,
 Giddy with pleasure, to look down,
 And from the Vales to view the noble heights above!

The mountains give delight in two ways - as vantage-points and as objects of grandeur to look up at. The vocabulary in which Cotton expresses his pleasure is worth examining. The rocks "awe" and "brave" the things around; mountains are "aspiring", and later "noble". These moral terms are a hangover from the emblematic method of description; in Cotton's poem they have an aesthetic rather than a moral force. The heights are "noble" for him not because they are opposed to the lowly valleys in some overall conception of nature, but because they make a particular kind of impression on his emotions or sensibility. The mountain's "crown" is already becoming merely its "top", not the mark of its regal position above the lowlier and humbler parts of creation. Stanza IX, which is devoted to the caves in which Cotton occasionally hid from his creditors, is closer in mood to Flatman's ode:-

What safety, privacy, what true delight,
 In the artificial Night
 Your gloomy entrails make,
 Have I taken, do I take!
 How oft, when grief has made me fly
 To hide me from Society,
 Even of my dearest Friends, have I
 In your recesses friendly shade
 All my sorrows open laid,
 And my most secret woes entrusted to your privacy!

This is partly derivative from the French poets, from such works as Saint-Amant's 'La Solitude'¹⁰⁹ - Cotton implies his debt by subtitling his poem "Stanzas Irreguliers" - with its Romantic confidence in the secrecy and sympathy of nature. There is some precedent for this in pastoral, where a shepherd may complain about his love-sickness in solitude, but the relation between the sorrowing man and the natural environment in 'The Retirement' is much closer to that felt by later poets, and by Flatman.

The poems of Lady Anne Winchilsea contain both detailed observation of nature, and experiences of personal involvement with a particular countryside. Explaining how she came to publish, and how the third Earl of Winchilsea encouraged her to write, she remarks in the preface to her volume of poetry: "But when I came to Eastwell, and cou'd fix my eyes only upon objects naturally inspiring soft and Poeticall. immaginations¹¹⁰ . . ." Natural objects give aesthetic pleasure and stimulate the imagination, rather than primarily teaching about God or moral law, as they had done in the earlier seventeenth century. The poem which expresses most explicitly the aesthetic approach to nature is 'An Invitation to Dafnis', in which she persuades her husband to leave his books and enjoy the delights that Eastwell has to offer out of doors. In the second stanza

she contrasts the beauties of nature with those of works of art:-

Rich Colours on the vellum cease to lay,
 When ev'ry lawn much nobler can display,
 When on the dazzling poppy may be seen
 A glowing red exceeding your carmine;
 And for the blue that o'er the sea is born,
 A brighter rises in our standing corn.¹¹¹

The details of poppy and cornflower strike with a pleasing freshness in comparison with the usual list of "crystal springs" and "shady woods" with which invitations to the country usually tempt their readers.

Of all Lady Winchilsea's poems, the most remarkable is the well-known 'A Nocturnal Reverie'.¹¹² It is full of precise and sensitive observation: the moon and trees reflected in a river; the "fresh'ned grass" standing straighter as the dew revives it; the foxgloves, which take on a "paler hue", but which still chequer "with red the dusky brakes"; the distinct sound of falling water heard at night; the haycocks which "thicken up the vale"; the encounter with the shadowy horse, munching on the "torn up forage"; the cries of the curlew and the partridge. In the closing lines, there is heard a Romantic note of communion with the stillness of the darkened countryside which has led some critics to think of Wordsworth:¹¹³

When a sedate content the spirit feels,
 And no fierce light disturbs, whilst it reveals,
 But silent musings urge the mind to seek
 Something too high for syllables to speak. . .

In this poem Lady Winchilsea goes much further than the aesthetic enjoyment of the natural world which is evident in several of her other

pieces. She responds to nature with what she calls "the free soul". There is a more complete surrender to the charming and healing influence of nature that looks forward to Wordsworth more, perhaps, than the simple fact of close attention to details.

8. Conclusion.

In the forty years after the death of Cowley, then, the movement towards the eighteenth-century descriptive poem and its descendent, the nature poem, was well under way. It did not engage the energies of the satirists and the brilliant group of Restoration Court poets, or, except in his capacity as translator, of the one major figure, John Dryden; but it did form a substantial secondary tradition, embodied in the work of such minor, but by no means negligible, poets as Charles Cotton, Richard Leigh, Philip Ayres, Thomas Flatman, John Norris, and a little later, Lady Winchilsea, John Philips, and William Diaper. The religious fervour of Vaughan and Benlowes, the rich ambivalence of Marvell, and the mythic grandeur of Milton had evaporated in the rational light of the new Augustan certainty, and in their place there was a growing sense of the aesthetic qualities of the countryside and of the objective interest of things as things. Wordsworth's complaint that, apart from the 'Nocturnal Reverie' and a passage or two in Windsor Forest, "the poetry of the period intervening between the publication of the *Paradise Lost* and the *Seasons* does not contain a single new image of external nature" is wide of the mark.¹¹⁴ And surely the poet who believed that, "The remotest discoveries of the Chemist, the Botanist, or Mineralogist, will be as

proper objects of the Poet's art as any upon which it can be employed",¹¹⁵
would have responded readily to the enthusiasm of Leigh and Diaper, had
he known their attempts to deal imaginatively with the new worlds revealed
by the telescope and the microscope.

NOTES

- 1 See, for example, Myra Reynolds, The Treatment of Nature in English Poetry between Pope and Wordsworth (Chicago, 1896); C.E. de Haas, Nature and the Country in English Poetry of the First Half of the Eighteenth Century (Amsterdam, 1928); G.G. Williams, "The Beginnings of Nature Poetry in the Eighteenth Century", Studies in Philology, XXVII (1930), 583-608; C.V. Deane, Aspects of Eighteenth-Century Nature Poetry (Oxford, 1935); Alan Dugald McKillop, The Background of Thomson's Seasons (1942, reissued Archon Books, Hamden, Connecticut, 1961).
- 2 See especially Maren-Sofie Røstvig, The Happy Man, Vol. I, 2nd. ed. (New York, 1962), pp. 229-310; and Bonamy Dobrée, "Nature Poetry in the Early Eighteenth Century", Essays and Studies (1965), 13-33.
- 3 M.A. Goldberg, "The Language of Art and Reality: A Study of Eighteenth-Century Hill Poems", Boston University Studies in English, III, No. 2 (1957), p. 66.
- 4 R.A. Aubin has characterized the eighteenth-century descriptive poem thus:- "A sort of genre-of-all-trades, it may embrace topographical, pastoral, didactic, narrative, political, and practically every other sort of stock poetic interest, but its primary function is to depict scenes, more frequently rural than urban". (Topographical Poetry in XVIII-Century England (New York, 1936), p. 46)
- 5 Matthew Coppinger, Poems, Songs, and Love-Verses (1682), p. 3. For other examples see N. Crutwell, Bristol Drollery (1674), 'To a Young Lady in a Garden, The Roses speech', pp. 46-47, and 'To Duserastes' by Mr C.G. of Aeton-Celledge, in the second part of Poetical Recreations (1688), pp. 262-63. For the earlier poems in this tradition, see above Chapter V, Section 6.
- 6 For a discussion of this type of poem, see above Chapter V, Section 1.
- 7 Matthew Stevenson, Norfolk Drollery (1673), pp. 7-8. Is "wither'd", in the fourth line quoted, a misprint for "whiter"?
- 8 Richard Flecknoe, A Collection of the Choicest Epigrams and Characters (1673), p. 55.
- 9 J.B. Leishman, The Art of Marvell's Poetry (London, 1966), p. 179 ff.
- 10 Both the Pulteney poems are in The Works of the English Poets, ed. Chalmers (London, 1810), XIII, 123.
- 11 See Philip Ayres's poem in Minor Poets of the Caroline Period, ed. George Saintsbury, Vol. II (Oxford, 1906), p. 298; Granville's in The History of Adolphus, Prince of Russia . . . With a Collection of Songs and Love-Verses. By Several Hands (1691), pp. 54-55; and Ann Killigrew's in Poems (1686), pp. 77-78. For other examples of this topos see Prior's 'To the Countess of D . . . t walking in a Garden', in Vol. I of Prior's Literary Works, ed. Wright and Spears (Oxford, 1959), p. 7; and Pope's Summer Pastoral, ll. 73-84.
- 12 Richard Leigh, Poems upon Several Occasions (1675), ed. Hugh MacDonald (Oxford, 1947), pp. 63-64.

- 13 John Norris, A Collection of Miscellanies: Consisting of Poems, Essays, Discourses & Letters, Occasionally Written, 2nd. ed. (1692), pp. 45-46. Compare Casimire's ode 'Out of Solomon's Sacred Marriage Song', quoted above in Chapter IV, Section 3.
- 14 See Elizabeth Rowe, Poems on Several Occasions (1696), in The Miscellaneous Works in Prose and Verse of Mrs Elizabeth Rowe (1739), I, 75-77; and William Walsh, in Chalmer's English Poets (London, 1810), Vol. VIII, p. 417.
- 15 See Minor Poets of the Eighteenth Century, ed. Hugh I'Anson Fausset, "Everyman's Library" (London, 1930), pp. 34-35. Myra Reynolds comments on this poem:- "The transition from the artificial subordination of nature to man, to the conception of nature as a vital and separate entity, was the slow process of a century. Lady Winchilsea's place in this historical sequence becomes then of especial significance, when we find in her poems not only a forecast of the modern thought, but a protest against the conventional idea". (From the introduction to The Poems of Anne Countess of Winchilsea (Chicago, 1903), p. cxxxi.)
- 16 See, for example, Pope's 'A Discourse on Pastoral Poetry' (1704); Ambrose Philips's 'Preface to the Pastoral Poems' (1708); Thomas Tickell's papers in The Guardian, Nos. 22, 23, 28, 30, and 32 (1713); John Gay's 'Proeme' of The Shepherd's Week (1714); and Thomas Parney's A Full Enquiry into the True Nature of Pastoral (1717). The major critical study on the eighteenth-century concept of the genre is J.E. Congleton's Theories of Pastoral Poetry in England: 1684-1798 (Gainesville, Florida, 1952).
- 17 Geoffrey Tillotson, Augustan Poetic Diction (London, 1964), p. 18.
- 18 Westminster Drollery, ed. J. Woodfall Ebsworth (Boston, Lincs., 1875), pp. 68-69. For a discussion of this type of poem see above, Chapter IV, Section 6.
- 19 Daniel Defoe, The Storm (1704), pp. 43-44.
- 20 *ibid.*, pp. A6v-A7r.
- 21 Lady Winchilsea, *ed. cit.*, pp. 105-112.
- 22 Thomas Heyrick, Miscellany Poems (Cambridge, 1691), pp. 14-15, 16-17, 18-19, 22-23, 23-24, 42-43, 53, 84-85, and 36-37.
- 23 John Rawlet, Poetick Miscellanies (1687), pp. 86-87; Poetical Recreations (1688), Part I by Jane Barker, pp. 24-27.
- 24 Rawlet, pp. 72-73, 74-76, and 77-82. The quoted passage is on p. 73.
- 25 See above, Chapter VI, Section 6 and Chapter IX, Section 4.
- 26 See Minor Poets of the Caroline Period, ed. George Saintsbury, Vol. III (Oxford, 1921), pp. 318-19.
- 27 Ambrose Philips, Miscellany Poems (1697), pp. 1-2.
- 28 Elizabeth Rowe, *ed. cit.*, I, 31 and 45.
- 29 See above, Chapter VI, Section 6 and Chapter IX, Section 4.
- 30 Hoxie Neale Fairchild, Religious Trends in English Poetry, Vol. I: 1700-1740 (New York, 1939), p. 124.
- 31 Daniel Baker, Poems Upon Several Occasions (1697), pp. 83-89.
- 32 Norris, *ed. cit.*, p. 18. Norris was transferred from a living in Somerset to Bemerton Rectory in 1691.

- 33 Rawlet, op. cit., pp. 46-47.
- 34 Poetical Recreations (1688), Part II, pp. 47-48.
- 35 Elizabeth Rowe, ed. cit., I, 36.
- 36 Traherne died in 1674^p and his poems were not printed till 1903. The date of composition of the poems is uncertain. He made a fair copy of them some time in the last few years of his life, but probably composed them earlier. For a discussion of the MSS and dates see the introduction to H.M. Margoliouth's edition of the Centuries, Poems, and Thanksgivings, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1958). All references to Traherne's poems are to Vol. II of this edition.
- 37 Traherne, ed. cit., p. 52.
- 38 *ibid.*, pp. 6 and 42.
- 39 *ibid.*, p. 94, from 'The World'.
- 40 *ibid.*, see 'The World', p. 93; and 'Nature', p. 62. See also K.W. Salter, Thomas Traherne: Mystic and Poet (London, 1964), p. 115.
- 41 Traherne, p. 16.
- 42 For an account of the popular interest in science in the period see above, Chapter II, Section 6.
- 43 Richard Leigh, ed. cit., pp. 22-24.
- 44 See above, Chapter II, Sections 7, 4, and 5.
- 45 The Complete Works of William Diaper, ed. Dorothy Broughton, "Muse's Library" (London, 1951), p. 74.
- 46 Leigh, ed. cit., pp. 47-48.
- 47 *ibid.*, pp. 30-31.
- 48 Marjorie Hope Nicolson, Newton Demands the Muse (Princeton, 1946, edition used 1966), pp. 6-7. For an account of Newton's optical discoveries see above, Chapter II, Section 8, and for an examination of the effects of the new theories of light and colour on the poetic imagination of the eighteenth century see Professor Nicolson's book.
- 49 Leigh, ed. cit., pp. 36-39. For an account of Cowley's ode 'To Light', see above, Chapter XIV, Section 2.
- 50 See Nicolson, op. cit., pp. 9-10.
- 51 See Poems of Charles Cotton, ed. John Buxton, "Muse's Library" (London, 1958), pp. 52-94.
- 52 See above, Chapter II, Section 11.
- 53 Early Essays and Romances of Sir William Temple, Bt., ed. G.C. Moore Smith (Oxford, 1930), p. 183.
- 54 Poetical Recreations (1688), Part II, pp. 200-03.
- 55 Lady Winchilsea, ed. cit., p. 101.
- 56 Dryden made this remark in the dedication of Annus Mirabilis (1667). See Dryden: Poetry, Prose and Plays, ed. Douglas Grant (London, 1952), p. 31.
- 57 Elizabeth Nitchie, Virgil and the English Poets (New York, 1966), p. 150. For an idea of the widespread knowledge of Virgil, and interest in his works, see the long list of late seventeenth-century translations provided in the bibliography of this book.
- 58 A good deal of research has been done on Dryden's translation of Virgil, and it has shown that he made deliberate use of earlier

translations and commentaries. L. Proudfoot, in Dryden's Aeneid (Manchester, 1960), concludes that "he was seeking a definitive version, constantly embodying in his own work what he thought had been well done, and constantly measuring himself against the best version he could find of any given passage". (p. 267). See also J. McG. Bottkol, "Dryden's Latin Scholarship", Modern Philology, XL (1942-43), 241-254; Helene Maxwell Hooker, "Dryden's Georgics and English Predecessors", Huntington Library Quarterly, IX, No. 3 (1946), 273-310; and William Frost, Dryden and the Art of Translation (New Haven, 1955).

59 Tillotson, op. cit., p. 33.

60 John Chalker, The English Georgic (London, 1969), p. 15.

61 H.M. Hooker lists the English versions of the Georgics in n. 5, p. 275 of her article cited above. Among the translators were Cowley, Chetwood, Lauderdale, Addison, and Sedley.

62 Dwight L. Durling, The Georgic Tradition in English Poetry (New York, 1935), p. 35.

63 Wolfgang Bernard Flieschmann, Lucretius and English Literature: 1680-1740 (Paris, 1964), sees the fifth edition of Thomas Creech's translation of the De Rerum Natura (1700) as the most significant work for the influence of the Latin poet on the English tradition:- "What really distinguishes the fifth, from all the previous editions of Creech's translation is the acceptance of De Rerum Natura as a formative element in English literature. The editor's heavy reliance on Dryden's criticism and translations of Lucretius, coupled with the strong praise of Dryden throughout the edition, make me suspect that Dryden's work is responsible for this change". (pp. 132-33).

64 ibid., p. 220.

65 ibid., p. 228.

66 See above, Chapter IV, Section 2.

67 John Arthos, The Language of Natural Description in Eighteenth-Century Poetry (Michigan, 1949 and 1966), p. 17.

68 R.A. Brower, "Dryden's Poetic Diction and Virgil", Philological Quarterly, XVIII, No. 2 (1939), p. 216.

69 Diaper, ed. cit., p. vii.

70 See The Works of Virgil Translated by John Dryden, introd. by James Kinsley (London, 1961), pp. 101, 175, and 247.

71 John Ogilby, Virgil's Works, 2nd. ed. (1654), p. 215.

72 This MS poem was printed in The Harleian Miscellany (London, 1809), Vol. IV, pp. 556-73. It also appears in Thomas Shipman's Carolina: Or, Loyal Poems (1683), pp. 230-51, and is presumably by this poet.

73 R.A. Aubin, op. cit., p. 75.

74 See the remarks on this subject by James Sutherland in A Preface to Eighteenth Century Poetry (London, 1948 and 1966):- "The determination of many readers of poetry to bring every piece of descriptive writing to the naturalistic test, and to praise or condemn in proportion to the degree of naturalism achieved, is frequently beside the point when applied to the work of the eighteenth-century

poet. . . . The details may, indeed, be true to life, but equally well they may be formalized, and in any case it is the design that matters". (p. 117).

- 75 See Chalmers's English Poets (London, 1810), Vol. VIII, pp. 284-87.
 76 This poem is printed in Early Essays and Romances of Sir William Temple, Bt., ed. cit., pp. 186-88. The possible ascription to Swift is made in the introduction, pp. xxvii-viii. Swift made two important contributions to the development of descriptive verse with 'A Description of the Morning' (1709) and 'A Description of a City Shower' (1710).

- 77 The editor notes the borrowing of the phrase from Paradise Lost, Book VII, l. 323.

- 78 See Poems on Several Occasions (1699), pp. 65-72. Thomas Shipman has a piece that is related to the topographical genre, called 'The Grove. 1675. Some thoughts dedicated to the Nymphs of the pleasant Grove at S. belonging to my most honour'd Friend Peniston Whalley Esq.' It appears in Carolina (1683), pp. 153-56. The poem is of interest because it contains a late example of the conceit whereby trees are described in terms of soldiers:-

"Nor do the Trees confus'dly stand;
 But rank'd, and fil'd as they were trayn'd
 By the Commanders skilful hand.

Each row of sturdy Oaks appears
Squadrons of English Muskateers;
 The Acorns Shot, Leaves Bandileers.

Those stands of Ashes strongly spread,
 Like our stout Pike men, void of dread;
 With Keys, like Fringe about each head."

Previous examples of this conceit in poems by Cleveland, Waller, Fane, Benlowes, and Marvell have been noted elsewhere in this thesis. See above, Chapter XI, n. 36.

- 79 Francis Manning, Greenwich-Hill (1697). The dedication is unpaginated.
 80 *ibid.*, pp. 4-5.
 81 M.A. Goldberg, *op. cit.*, p. 67.
 82 See Joseph Addison, 'A Letter from Italy', printed in Poetical Miscellanies: the Fifth Part (1704), pp. 1-12; Richard Gwinnett's Pylades and Corinna, 2 vols. (1731 and 1732), I, 153-76, the passage quoted being on p. 164.
 83 Diaper, *ed. cit.*, pp. 3-8. This interesting poem first appeared under Diaper's name in 1727, but had been printed anonymously, under the title Lincolnshire, in 1720. See textual notes to edition cited, pp. 224-25.
 84 See Prior's Literary Works, *ed. cit.*, I, 24-25; and Examen Poeticum (1693), pp. 114-16.
 85 See the only cycle in the period 1645-1668 by Eldred Revett, discussed above, Chapter IV, Section 2.
 86 Philip Ayres, *ed. cit.*, p. 313. The other seasons are on pp. 311-12.

- 87 Charles Cotton, ed. cit., p. 18. The Winter Quatrains are on pp. 13-23.
- 88 See above, Chapter IV, Section 2.
- 89 Bonamy Dobrée quotes this poem in his article "Nature Poetry in the Early Eighteenth Century", cited n. 2 above, and comments:- "There is not a striking word through the whole poem, no original simile, hardly a simile at all. And, if we think of it, is there not a great deal to be said for liking a thing for its own sake, for seeing the object as it really is? Not to have to think in terms of somebody else's mind, or feel with somebody else's feeling?" (p. 21).
- 90 Riccaltoun's poem appeared in Savage's Miscellany (1726), and was the avowed inspiration of Thomson's Winter. See McKillop, op. cit., p. 3.
- 91 See Matthew Coppinger, Poems, Songs, and Love-Verses (1682), pp. 64-65; Sylvae (1685), pp. 418-20; and Miscellany Poems, Vol. I (1684), pp. 203-06.
- 92 See Ayres, ed. cit., p. 287; Sylvae, p. 128; Examen Poeticum (1693), pp. 234-38; and Thomas Brown, Works, Vol. III (1708), pp. 101-02.
- 93 See Granville's version in Examen Poeticum, pp. 331-34; and Rawlet's, op. cit., p. 104.
- 94 See, for example, Mrs Jane Barker, 'An Invitation to my Friends at Cambridge', op. cit., pp. 1-4; Elizabeth Rowe, Poems on Several Occasions (1696), 'To Madam S---- at the Court', pp. 46-48; Lady Winchilsea's 'An Invitation to Dafnis', ed. cit., pp. 15-16.
- 95 See, for example, Robert Gould, 'To Mr G.F. then in the Country. Writ in 1681', in Poems (1689), pp. 39-40; Otway's 'Epistle to Mr. Duke', ed. cit., p. 295; and Walwyn's 'To Mr. in the Country; with some other Verses' and 'To a Friend in the Countrey', in Poems on Several Occasions (1699), pp. 21-22 and 28-29.
- 96 See, for example, the Earl of Roscommon's 'Ode upon Solitude', in Chalmers's English Poets (London, 1810), Vol. VIII, pp. 267-68; John Norris, 'The Retirement', ed. cit., pp. 24-25; Charles Cotton's 'Contentation', ed. cit., pp. 251-57; and Alexander Pope's 'Ode on Solitude', in Poetical Works, ed. Herbert Davis (London, 1966), pp. 59-60.
- 97 See above, Chapter VI, Section 1.
- 98 Røstvig, I, 230.
- 99 Rawlet, op. cit., p. 67.
- 100 Daniel Baker, op. cit., pp. 3-4.
- 101 John Pomfret, Chalmers's English Poets (London, 1810), Vol. VIII, p. 307.
- 102 Coppinger, op. cit., p. 27.
- 103 Aphra Behn, Poems upon Several Occasions (1684), pp. 93-94.
- 104 This is the poem in Miscellany Poems cited in n. 91 above. As Røstvig points out (pp. 248-49), it is more of a free paraphrase than a translation, and is "frankly erotic".
- 105 Bonamy Dobrée, op. cit., n. 2 above, p. 16.

- 106 Jane Barker, op. cit., p. 21.
- 107 Thomas Flatman, in Minor Poets of the Caroline Period, ed. George Saintsbury, Vol. III (Oxford, 1921), pp. 312-14.
- 108 Cotton, ed. cit., pp. 48-51.
- 109 For a discussion of versions of this French poem by Lord Fairfax and Katherine Philips see above, Chapter VI, Section 3.
- 110 See Myra Reynolds's edition of The Poems of Anne Countess of Winchilsea (Chicago, 1903), p. 8. Lady Winchilsea's Miscellany Poems were not published until 1713, but she began writing as early as 1685, and a good many of her poems belong to the seventeenth century. She and her husband settled at Eastwell in about 1690.
- 111 Lady Winchilsea, ed. cit., n. 15 above, p. 15.
- 112 *ibid.*, pp. 116-17.
- 113 Myra Reynolds writes of this passage:- "[These lines] present an interpretation of the effect of nature on the heart and mind of man so exactly Wordsworthian in substance and mood that it is hard to date it eighty-five years before the 'Lyrical Ballads'. (op. cit., n. 110 above, p. cxxxi).
- 114 From "Essay, Supplementary to the Preface" (1815), in The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth, 5 vols., ed. E. de Selincourt, 2nd. ed. (Oxford, 1952), II, 419-20.
- 115 Preface to the 2nd. ed. of Lyrical Ballads, ed. cit., pp. 396-97.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Chronological Table of English Poetry Published 1645-1668*

- 1645 John Milton, Poems
 Edmund Waller, Poems
 William Cavendish, Duke of Newcastle, Phanseys (written c. 1645)
 George Daniel, Scattered Fancies (dated 1645 on title-page of MS)
 Ralph Knevet, A Gallery to the Temple (probably written in 1640s)
- 1646 Richard Crashaw, Steps to the Temple
 John Hall, Poems
 Martin Lluelyn, Men-Miracles
 Thomas Philipott, Poems
 James Shirley, Poems
 Henry Vaughan, Poems
 G. Mills (trans.), Odes of Casimire
- 1647 Robert Baron, The Cyprian Academy
 John Cleveland, Poems
 Richard Corbett (d. 1635), Certain Elegant Poems
 Abraham Cowley, The Mistress
 John Hall, The Second Booke of Divine Poems
 Christopher Harvey, Schola Cordis
 Henry More, Philosophical Poems
 Thomas Stanley, Poems and Translations
 Sir Christopher Wyvill, Certaine Serious Thoughts
- 1648 Richard Corbett (d. 1635), Poetica Stromata
 William Davenant, Madagascar; with other Poems
 Mildmay Fane, Earl of Westmorland, Otia Sacra
 Sir Richard Fanshawe, Il Pastor Fido . . . with An Addition of
 divers other Poems
 Robert Herrick, Hesperides and Noble Numbers
- 1649 Richard Lovelace, Lucasta
 John Ogilby (trans.), The Works of Virgilius Maro
- 1650 Robert Baron, Pocula Castalia
 Robert Heath, Clarastella
 Henry Vaughan, Silex Scintillans I

* This chronological table does not include all volumes of poetry printed during the period 1645-1668, but it covers those publications which contained verse deemed significant for this study. Mention is also made of unpublished poetry which is usually attributed to this period, or which is dated in manuscript.

- 1651 Patrick Carey, Trivial Poems, and Triolets
 Clement Barksdale, Nympha Libethris; or the Cotswold Muse
 William Cartwright (d. 1643), Poems
 Sir Edward Sherburne, Poems and Translations
 Thomas Stanley, Poems
 Henry Vaughan, Olor Iscannus
- 1652 Edward Benlowes, Theophila
 Joseph Beaumont, (some of the important shorter poems dated 1652)
 Andrew Marvell (the Appleton House and Mower poems probably written)
- 1653 Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle, Poems and Fancies
 Anne Collins, Divine Songs and Meditations
 Thomas Fettiplace, The Sinner's Tears, in Meditations and Prayers
 Nicholas Hookes, Amanda, a Sacrifice to an Unknown Goddess
- 1654 Matthew Stevenson, Occasions Off-spring
 Thomas Washbourne, Divine Poems
- 1655 Ralph Cudmore, Euchodia: a Prayer Song
 Sir John Denham, Cooper's Hill (authorized ed.)
 William Hammond, Poems
 Henry Vaughan, Siles Scintillans I and II
The Marrow^d Complements
Wit's Interpreter (ed. John Cotgrave)
- 1656 John Collop, Poesis Rediviva: or, Poesie Reviv'd
 Abraham Cowley, Poems
- 1657 Henry King, Poems
 Eldred Revett, Poems
- 1658 Hugh Crompton, Pierides, or the Muses Mount
 Edmund Klys, Divine Poems
 John Hall (d. 1656), Emblems
- 1659 Richard Lovelace (d. 1656/7), Lucasta, Posthume Poems
- 1660 Samuel Pordage, Poems
 Robert Wild, Iter Boreale
- 1661 Alexander Brome, Songs and Poems
 Pathericke Jenkyn, Amorea, the Lost Lover
- 1662 Rowland Watkyns, Flamma sine Fumo
- 1663 Abraham Cowley, Verses upon Several Occasions

- 1664 Henry Bold, Poems: Lyrique, Macaronique, Heroique, &c.
 Katherine Philips, Poems (unauthorized ed.)
- 1667 John Milton, Paradise Lost
 Katherine Philips, Poems (enlarged ed.)
 Jeremiah Wells, Poems upon Divers Occasions
- 1668 Abraham Cowley, Works
 Sir John Denham, Poems and Translations

APPENDIX B

Alphabetical Table of Poets

ADDISON, Joseph	(1672-1719)
AYRES, Philip	(1638-1712)
BAKER, Daniel	(Poems published 1697)
BARKER, Jane	(Poems published 1688)
BARKSDALE, Clement	(1609-1687)
BARON, Robert	(fl. 1645)
BEAUMONT, Joseph	(1616-1699)
BREEDOME, Thomas	(1613-1640/1?)
BEHN, Aphra	(1640-1689)
BENLOWES, Edward	(1602-1676)
BLACKMORE, Sir Richard	(c. 1650-1729)
BOLD, Henry	(1627-1683)
BROME, Alexander	(1620-1666)
BROWN, Thomas	(1663-1704)
BROWNE, William	(1590/1-1643/5)
CAREW, Thomas	(1594/5-1640)
CAREY, Patrick	(1624-1656)
CARTWRIGHT, William	(c. 1611-1643)
CAVENDISH, Margaret	(1623-1673)
CAVENDISH, William	(1592-1676)
CHAMBERLAIN, Robert	(1607-post 1662)
CLEVELAND, John	(1613-1658)
COLLINS, Anne	(Poems published 1653)
COLLOP, John	(1625-post 1676)
CONGREVE, William	(1670-1729)
COPPINGER, Matthew	(Poems published 1682)
CORBETT, Richard	(1582-1635)
COTTON, Charles	(1630-1687)
COWLEY, Abraham	(1618-1667)
CREECH, Thomas	(1659-1700)
CRASHAW, Richard	(1612/13-1649)
CROMPTON, Hugh	(fl. 1657)
CRUTWELL, N.	(Poems published 1674)
CUDMORE, Ralph	(Poems published 1655)
DANIEL, George	(1616-1657)
DAVENANT, Sir William	(1606-1668)
DAVIES, Sir John	(1569-1626)
DEFOE, Daniel	(c. 1660-1731)
DENHAM, Sir John	(1615-1669)
DIAPER, William	(1685-1717)
DONNE, John	(1572-1631)
DRAYTON, Michael	(1563-1631)
DRYDEN, John	(1631-1700)
DUKE, Richard	(1658-1711)

DYER, John	(c. 1700-1758)
ELYS, Edmund	(c. 1634-1707 fl.)
FAIRFAX, Lord Thomas	(1612-1671)
FANE, Mildmay	(1602-1666)
FANSHAWE, Sir Richard	(1608-1666)
FETTIPLACE, Thomas	(Poems published 1653)
FLATMAN, Thomas	(1637-1688)
FLECKNOE, Richard	(d. 1678?)
GOULD, Robert	(1660?-1709?)
GRANVILLE, George	(1667-1735)
GWINNETT, Richard	(d. 1717)
HABINGTON, William	(1605-1654)
HALL, John	(1627-1656)
HAMMOND, William	(1614-1655 fl.)
HARVEY, Christopher	(1597-1663)
HEATH, Robert	(fl. 1650)
HERBERT, Lord Edward	(1582-1648)
HERBERT, George	(1593-1633)
HERRICK, Robert	(1591-1674)
HEYRICK, Thomas	(c. 1650-1694)
HOBBS, Thomas	(1588-1679)
HOOKE, Nicholas	(1628-1712)
HUME, Alexander	(1557?-1609)
JENKYN, Pathericke	(1639- poems published 1661)
JONSON, Ben	(1572/3-1637)
KILLIGREW, Anne	(c. 1660-1685)
KING, Henry	(1592-1669)
KNEVET, Ralph	(1602-1672)
LEIGH, Richard	(1649-1675 fl.)
LLUELYN, Martin	(1616-1682)
LOVELACE, Richard	(1618-1656/7)
MANNING, Francis	(Poems published 1697)
MARLOWE, Christopher	(1564-1593)
MARVELL, Andrew	(1621-1678)
MILTON, John	(1608-1674)
MORE, Henry	(1614-1687)
NORRIS, John	(1657-1711)
OGILBY, John	(1600-1676)
OTWAY, Thomas	(1652-1685)
PHILIPOTT, Thomas	(c. 1616-1682)
PHILIPS, Ambrose	(c. 1675-1749)
PHILIPS, John	(1676-1709)
PHILIPS, Katherine	(1632-1664)
POMFRET, John	(1667-1702)
POPE, Alexander	(1688-1744)
PORDAGE, Samuel	(1633-1691?)
PRIOR, Matthew	(1664-1721)
PRYNNE, William	(1600?-1669)

QUARLES, Francis	(1592-1644)
RANDOLPH, Thomas	(1605-1635)
RAWLET, John	(1642-1686)
REVERT, Eldred	(fl. 1650-1660)
ROCHESTER, Earl of	(1647-1680)
ROSCOMMON, Earl of	(1633?-1685)
ROWE, Elizabeth	(1674-1737)
SHAKESPEARE, William	(1564-1616)
SHERBURNE, Sir Edward	(1616-1702)
SHIPMAN, Thomas	(1632-1680)
SHIRLEY, James	(1596-1666)
SOUTHWELL, Robert	(1561-1595)
SPENSER, Edmund	(1552?-1599)
STANLEY, Thomas	(1625-1678)
STEVENSON, Matthew	(1627-1685)
STRODE, William	(1602?-1645)
SWIFT, Jonathan	(1667-1745)
SUCKLING, Sir John	(1609-1642)
SYLVESTER, Joshua	(1563-1718)
TATE, Nahum	(1652-1715)
TEMPLE, Sir William	(1628-1699)
THOMSON, James	(1700-1748)
TRAHERNE, Thomas	(1637-1674)
VAUGHAN, Henry	(1621/2-1695)
WALLER, Edmund	(1606-1687)
WALSH, William	(1663-1708)
WALWYN, H.	(Poems published 1699)
WASHBOURNE, Thomas	(1606-1687)
WATKYNs, Rowland	(Poems published 1662)
WATTS, Isaac	(1674-1748)
WELLS, Jeremiah	(Poems published 1667)
WILD, Robert	(1609-1679)
WINCHILSEA, Countess of	(1661-1720)
WITHER, George	(1588-1667)
WYVILL, Sir Christopher	(1614-1672?)

APPENDIX C

The Pastoral Hyperbole

J.B. Leishman has traced the development of that peculiar refinement of the pathetic fallacy, which he has called the "pastoral hyperbole", from Hesiod and Theocritus to Alexander Pope (The Art of Marvell's Poetry, pp. 224-44), and a brief account of its popularity in the English verse of the mid-seventeenth century has been given in Chapter IV, Section 5 of this dissertation. The purpose of this appendix is to provide a more complete catalogue of the occurrence of this figure in the 1640s-1660s. The examples are divided into two groups: firstly, poems based on the formula established by William Strode's "I saw faire Cloris walke alone", in which a lady is courted by nature as she walks in the garden, the snow, the park, etc.; and secondly, poems in which the "pastoral hyperbole" appears as a minor embellishment.

I.

'On a Gentlewoman Walking in the Snowe' (William Strode, first printed in W. Porter's Madrigals and Aires (1632)).

'Upon My Lady Carlisle's Walking in Hampton Court Garden' (Thomas Carew and Sir John Suckling, written some time before the former's death in 1640).

'Lavinia walking in a frosty Morning' (anonymous, first printed in Benson's edition of Shakespeare's Poems (1640)).

'Vpon a Gentlewoman walking on the Grasse' (anonymous, printed in Benson's edition of Shakespeare's Poems (1640)).

"I saw faire Flora take the aire" (ascribed to "Humphrey Hide" in a MS, printed in Wits Recreations (1640). See Leishman, p. 231, n. 2, for this ascription).

- 'To his M^{rs} Walking in y^e snow' (William Cartwright, written some time before his death in 1643).
- 'Upon Phillis walking in a morning before sun-rising' (John Cleveland, Poems (1647)).
- 'Aramantha' (ll. 35-82) (Richard Lovelace, Lucasta (1649). Although this example is part of a longer poem it clearly belongs to the same tradition).
- 'On Clarastella walking in her Garden' (Robert Heath, Clarastella (1650)).
- Upon Appleton House (stanzas lxxxi-lxxxviii) (Andrew Marvell, written in the early 1650s. This, too, is part of a longer poem, but claims a place here because of its affinities with other items in this list).
- 'To Amanda walking in the Garden' (Nicholas Hookes, Amanda (1653)).
- 'The Walk' (William Hammond, Poems (1655)).
- 'On a beautifull Lady walking in Hide-Park when the grasse first shewed it self' (printed in Wits Interpreter (1655)).
- 'Upon a Gentlewoman caught in a shower of Haile' (Eldred Revett, Poems (1657)).
- 'To Amorea walking in her-Garden' (Pathericke Jenkyn, Amorea (1661)).

II. Instances of the "pastoral hyperbole" are so frequent in the lyrics of the period that only a small representative selection can be given here.

- 'At Penshurst' (Edmund Waller, probably written before 1639, printed in Poems (1645)).
- 'On her Coming to London' (Edmund Waller, Poems (1645)).
- 'An Epithalamium' (Thomas Philipott, Poems (1646)).
- 'The Lure' (John Hall, Poems (1646)).
- 'The Spring' (Sir Richard Fanshawe, Il Pastor Fido, with Poems (1648)).
- 'The Queene, returning to London after a long absence' (William Davenant, Madagascar; with other Poems (1648)).

'From Marino's Il rapimento d'Eurista' (Thomas Stanley, Poems (1651)).

'To Amanda waking' (Nicholas Hookes, Amanda (1653)).

'The Spring' (William Hammond, Poems (1655)).

'The Surprize' (Charles Cotton, in MS dated 1666, printed in Poems on Several Occasions (1689)).

For examples of the "pastoral hyperbole" in Marvell's Mower poems and in Paradise Lost see above, Chapter XII, Section 6 and Chapter XIII, Section 6; and for examples of the continuation of the device into the later decades of the seventeenth century see above, Chapter XV, Section 1.

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